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Top judge lambasts Howard

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Legal Affairs Editor

England's top judge was yesterday set on a collision course with Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, after attacking the Government's sentencing plans and signalling that he would oppose them in Parliament.

Lord Bingham, the Lord Chief Justice, who was holding his first media conference since his appointment in May, insisted that the judges who heard cases were uniquely placed to decide what sentences fitted the crimes.

He went on to say that prison did not necessarily "work", and in remarks that will anger the "life must mean life" lobby, he hacked the abolition of the mandatory life sentence for murder. He also criticised the Home Secretary's powers to decide the minimum "tariffs" to be served and whether prisoners should be released on licence.

Mr Howard, whose decision to raise the tariff of the child killers of James Bulger was quashed by the Court of Appeal, is strongly opposed to all three of these changes. Nor has Jack Straw, his Labour shadow, shown any indication of support.

Lord Bingham, who, as a senior judge, has a seat in the House of Lords, insisted that the judiciary was entitled to voice its opposition to the Government's US-style proposals for automatic life terms for twice-convicted serious violent or sexual offenders and minimum sentences for third-time burglars and drug dealers.

"The judge who tries a case, who sees and hears from those connected with the victim, who has the whole atmosphere internally generated by the case,

who has very full exposure to the background of the defendant, who is by professional training and experience alive to all the many and complicated issues which affect determination of sentence, should not be told he has to do this, that or the other willy-nilly," he said.

The comments reveal Lord Bingham as perhaps less bluntly spoken than his predecessor, Lord Taylor, but no less independent-minded. Mr Howard's critics in the Lords will take them as their cue to launch an all-out offensive against the plans, but they are bound to renege claims that the judiciary is seeking to interfere in political decision-making. John Mac-

Some previous judgments on Howard

"Never in the history of criminal law have such far-reaching proposals been put forward on the strength of such flimsy and dubious evidence." Lord Taylor, former Lord Chief Justice.

"Sentencing should be left to the courts, if you really want to reduce crime, improve the detection and conviction rates." Lord Hailsham, former Conservative Lord Chancellor.

"The proposals would fetter judges' constitutional duty to do justice in mercy on behalf of the Queen." Sir Frederick Lawton, former Court of Appeal judge.

"The proposals for minimum and life sentences are contrary to most professional advice." Lord Donaldson, former Master of the Rolls.

for has made it clear that he accepts none of the objections to what represents a major incursion into judicial discretion, and Mr Howard appealed to peers only last week to co-operate with getting the proposals onto the statute book before the general election.

Lord Bingham insisted that judges were alive to public concern about crime and warned against "knee-jerk reactions" to individual cases. Judges used to be caricatured as "blood-thirsty old men... now they are now caricatured as liberal pinkos who never punish anybody. Neither of these caricatures is at all close to the truth."

Asked if prison "worked", he said: "So long as somebody is in prison, he or she cannot be committing a crime. If you say to me 'do I think that prison makes people better?', the answer is... it is not necessarily therapeutic to put an offender among the company for a long period of other offenders. Experience shows that they sometimes learn to become more sophisticated criminals."

Lord Bingham said the case had been made for the mandatory life sentence for adult murderers to be swept away, leaving judges to decide whether to impose a life term or not. He drew a clear distinction between a mercy killing and a professional gangster who killed in the course of a robbery.

In a further controversial move, Lord Bingham endorsed demands for research into how juries reach their decisions, and mounted a strong defence of his backing for the incorporation of the European Convention of Human Rights into UK law. He disagreed with the Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, that this would draw judges into the political arena.



Fire and ice: Icelanders yesterday braced themselves for massive flooding following a volcanic eruption under the Vatnajökull glacier in the south of the island. Water levels in lakes under the glacier rose to their highest levels this century. On Wednesday the volcano smashed through the glacier, spewing black clouds five miles into the air. Photograph: Reuters

Gulf soldiers were 'poison' victims

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
IAN BURRELL and
NICHOLAS SCHOON

The Ministry of Defence admitted yesterday that hundreds of British troops in the Gulf war may have been poisoned by large quantities of pesticides used in the desert.

The announcement was seized upon by campaigners seeking compensation for victims of the so-called Gulf War Syndrome, as evidence that the MoD was responsible for bringing on their illnesses.

Huge quantities of chemicals were sprayed from planes on to the tents where British troops were living, to give protection against diseases carried by mosquitoes and sand flies.

Since the end of the conflict, 750 serving and former British soldiers have complained of illness, with symptoms including chronic depression, lack of energy and physical pain.

Yesterday, in a letter to Michael Colvin, chairman of the Commons defence committee, Nicholas Soames, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, said: "It has become clear that organophosphate pesticides (OPs) were used more widely in the Gulf than we had previously been led to believe. This was because of the understandable difficulties in getting sufficient supplies of pesticides delivered to the Gulf theatre in the early stages of the operation."

Hilary Meredith, a Manchester solicitor representing many claimants, immediately accused the Government of covering up the use of OPs for five years.

She said: "During the course of litigation we will be able to prove that the MoD knew the extent of OP use in the Gulf as long ago as 1991. We have MoD documentation to prove it and we will be disclosing it during litigation."

In his letter, Mr Soames added: "We wish to know whether any of the Gulf veterans may be ill as a result of exposure to organophosphates so that we can ensure that they are receiving the most appropriate treatment."

However the MoD does not accept the existence of a single illness which could be described as "Gulf War Syndrome".

OPs are now less widely used than they were at the beginning of the 1990s. During the war, large quantities were bought by the British and American forces locally, mainly in Saudi Arabia, to deal with swarms of flies in the marshy areas on the coast and in southern Iraq.

Pesticides manufactured in developing countries have often been found to contain impurities which make them more dangerous. Pesticide poisoning is far more common in the Third World than in the West.

A soldier's story, page 3

Gun campaign mother caught in the crossfire

CLARE GARNER

Ann Pearson, the woman leading the Dunblane campaign to ban handguns, yesterday shrugged off her new "political" role and promised to keep telling her message to whoever will listen.

Clearly bemused at being caught in the crossfire between Labour and the Tories after her speech at the Blackpool conference, she told *The Independent*: "This, to us, is not party political. We're on a train and we don't know where it's taking us. Yesterday it took us to Blackpool... If we're asked, we go. If we can, we go."

"If they want to start throwing insults at each other, fine, but all that's going to do is convey a message to the public which will not be very nice," said

Mrs Pearson, who votes Conservative.

Her impassioned speech at the Labour Party conference on Thursday opened and ended with a standing ovation and reduced many Labour delegates to tears. But her eloquent appeal for a ban on all handguns prompted a somewhat different response from the Tories.

The Conservative Party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, yesterday accused Labour of cynically breaching the political truce over the gun massacre. "We were appalled," said a Conservative Party spokeswoman. "What we're saying is we don't want a dreadful tragedy like that to be treated like a political football."

Mrs Pearson denied she had been a "Labour Party puppet", and that Labour had itself tak-

en a chance in inviting a "potentially loose cannon".

That speech was what I wanted to say. What the people of Dunblane wanted to say. They [Labour] didn't know what I was going to say."

She did not even toe the Labour Party line, she added. "I urged them [Labour] to go that step further to close the gap between us."

A Labour spokeswoman denied that the party was trying to tug heartstrings. "Basically, the Tories are embarrassed," she said. "They are using the excuse of a political football to cover up their embarrassment. Why haven't the Tories invited her? These people want to be heard."

Originally, Mrs Pearson hoped to go to the Conservative Party Conference. But the cost



Ann Pearson: Determined to keep telling her message

of hiring a stand - £3,000 - was more than the Appeal fund could afford. It was only when the Labour Party approached her that she reconsidered the possibility of making an impact during the conference season. Labour paid her expenses.

The absence of an invitation from the Conservatives did not surprise Mrs Pearson. "They have taken a very strong view on waiting on Lord Cullen," she said. "I think they feel I really should be quiet."

Shere puts the sex into politics

MICHAEL STREETER

Sex guru Shere Hite is famous for claiming that men have failed women in bed; now she claims they have failed them in politics too.

The controversial feminist, best known for her reports on sex, yesterday announced she intended to stand as a member of the European Parliament, defending women's rights.

Speaking at the Frankfurt Book Fair, where she is publishing her autobiography, Ms Hite said: "Governments are not really taking into consideration women's rights in their foreign policy."

She cited the plight of some women in the Middle East. "No government has spoken out about what Iran is doing to women in its country. I find this blindness so frustrating."

Ms Hite has now renounced

her American citizenship, has a German passport and is married to the German concert pianist, Friedrich Hoerichke.

She says she feels more at home in Germany than the US. "A lot of people helped me develop myself. I think the atmosphere here is much more appropriate to intellectual development."

For 20 years, Hite's critics have attacked her questionnaire research methods, calling her best-selling reports "masturbation manuals". Some US academics call her "Sheer Hype" and one British woman writer once dubbed her works "The Hate Reports."

Ms Hite also used the book fair to dish out advice on the Internet. She explained: "I will provide an 800-word essay every month on a theme like infidelity, clitoral stimulation or violence in sex."

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Don't dismiss the craziness of modern artists — they go where six-year-olds fear to tread

The logic of complete freedom leads to the madhouse," Simon Rattle recently said in his television programme about 20th-century music. It wasn't easy to see from the context exactly how we should read this remark — was it merely a paraphrase of Schoenberg's anxiety, an attempt to describe the vertigo of a composer newly liberated from traditional harmonies? Or were we to read it as a self-evident statement of truth? Plenty of people would happily subscribe to the latter view, in particular those who think that the tidal ebb of aesthetic obedience in the current century has exposed a slimy expanse of junk-dotted mud. It is very easy to turn the remark from a reminder that the true artist is always disciplined (even if they invent a new discipline) into a philistine sneer at artists whose work is not underwritten by traditional methods — a different way of saying that the lunatics have taken over the asylum.

Rattle's remark came to mind when I was looking at Antony Gormley's *Field*, a startling and thought-provoking installation at the Hayward Gallery. The work consists of around 40,000 little clay figures, crudely moulded into a rough approximation of a body, each with two indented holes for eyes. What makes people gasp when they face the room in which these homunculi are arrayed is not the quality of each individual figure. You could say of them, calling up another commonplace aggression against modern art, that "my six-year-old could do that". Indeed, this judgement is incontrovertible — Gormley used ordinary people to help make his figures, including children, whose smaller hands have produced infants for this wondrous population. But what exactly would you think if your six-year-old had done this — if every spare minute was bent to the creation of little figures, which were then neatly arranged in a bedroom to

THOMAS SUTCLIFFE



cover all horizontal surfaces? You would, surely, call a psychiatrist, even if your parental indulgence lasted beyond the 1,000 mark. Encountered anywhere but in an art gallery such behaviour — obsessive and fixated — would call for a clinical explanation, not a critical one.

This is not to argue that Gormley is deranged (though, like many artists, he may like to think of himself as not quite as sane as the next man) but it is to suggest that one of the features of the art of this century has been a readiness to see that psychosis might have things to tell us. And in the case of *Field*, the absence of reasonable limits delivers surprisingly rich dividends. This piece isn't just marvellous to look at — it sits in the viewer's thoughts of megalomania, benevolence, dread and cruelty (judging from overheard conversations, I wasn't the only one who felt an impulse to run into the room and trample these tiny, beseeching figures).

And there are incontrovertibly great artists who have gone even further in the pursuit of a single goal — both Mondrian and Giacometti might serve as examples of artistic compulsion that could easily look deranged if the inspection had different motives in mind — if the viewer was a psychiatric social worker and the paintings and sculptures were to be found in a cluttered bed-sit. Both those artists worked with traditional media but the almost limitless definition of what might now count as art has greatly expanded the repertoire of derangement. It isn't very difficult to find a contemporary artist to match almost any pathological symptom. Some mentally ill people collect their own faeces — so did Pietro Manzoni, in numbered tin-cans which he then sold to collectors. Some people suffer from a condition called dysmorphophobia, additively visiting plastic surgeons to alter their appearance — so does the artist Orlan, who records her grisly transformations on videotape.

This raises an obvious problem of discrimination. Coming out of the Hayward, I passed a homeless man pushing a railway trolley stacked with an office chair and a section of timber-veneered partition wall. Given an articulate rationale about these objects — an interest in "the fragility of the permanent", say, or an exploration of "communal loneliness" — as well as a gallery willing to endorse his vision, there is no reason why such an assemblage might not figure as an art installation. Indeed, the reason why most galleries would probably refuse is that it would be a bit old hat. Been there, done that.

Such facts are taken by conservatives as evidence for the general debasement of contemporary art. They aren't, but they do suggest that the viewer's duty of judgement begins rather earlier than it did in the 19th century, when the threshold question was not "is this art at all?" but "is it any good?" For my money, Orlan urgently needs to see a doctor, not another surgeon. But such cases shouldn't blind us to the fact that for some fine artists, "the road to the madhouse" has turned out to be a fascinating excursion, not a hideous wrong-turning.

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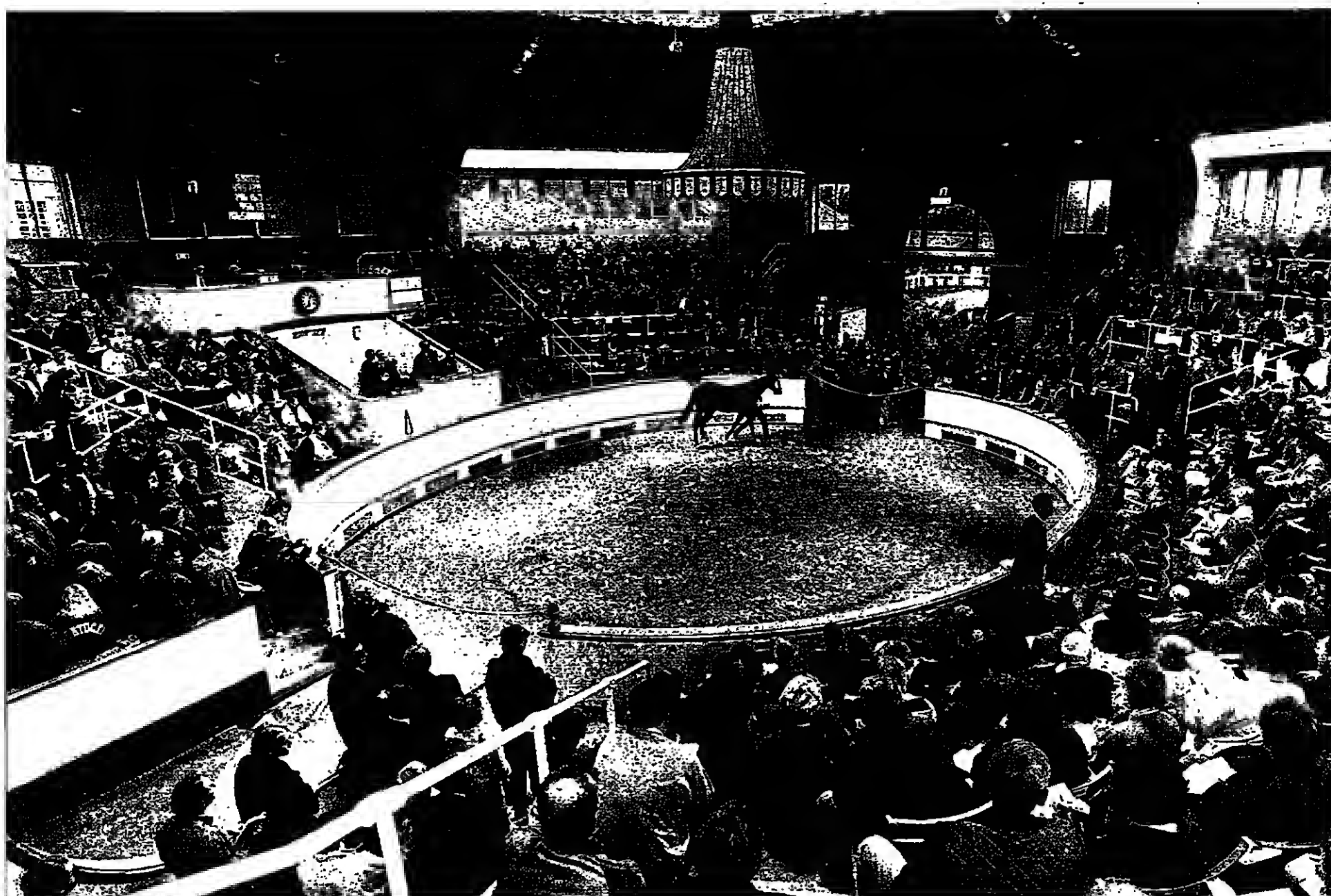
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cover photo: Robert Harding



Filthy rich and on the hoof

On Wednesday Mr Wafic Said, the widely respected Syrian philanthropist and friend to the stars, laid out a little loose change on a couple of new toys. That other people regard the price of a mansion in Wundsworth as loose change is sobering to contemplate but, then, war has been pretty profitable over the past decade and there's plenty of the old lucre to go around for those in the know. Mr Said's introductions of friends to friends may have led him to unsavoury places, but you don't get to be a major player in the racing world without making sacrifices.

The setting for these particular sacrifices was Newmarket, spiritual home of all thoroughbreds, and the scene was Tattersalls' 1996 Houghton Yearling Sales. Bidding through one Tim Bulwer-Long, Said bought a couple of colts: a son of Nashwan out of Music and Dance and the product of a tryst between Sadlers Wells and the American mare Impatiente. The first was a snip at 400,000 guineas; the second a very reasonable 500,000. Guineas, of course, add up: 500,000 guineas in real money is £525,000. Whoops, better make another introduction.

It's been a good year for Tattersalls. In just over three hours' hard selling on Tuesday evening, £7,136,850 changed hands. This was an increase of £2,856,000 on the same night last year. Racing, like every other luxury occupation, has been hit hard by the recession, but those green shoots of recovery were twining themselves round everyone in the business this week. Fifty-three per cent of this cash was accounted for by Wafic Said, Sheikh Mohammed, John Magnier and Michael Tabor. Dealer Demi O'Byrne, bidding on behalf of Tabor and Magnier, scraped up 880,000 hard-earned guineas for a colt by Kingmambo. This staggering price was, in fact, only the equal 10th highest price ever achieved at the sales. Prices haven't gone into seven figures since 1988, when Classic Thoroughbreds handed over 2,400,000 guineas for a colt called Classic Music, brother of Sadlers Wells. The horse never raced, and died in 1993 after two seasons at stud. An excellent investment for anybody's money.

This orgy of gambling on a scale that puts Monte Carlo to shame takes place in the immaculate Park Paddocks, a faultlessly mown and pampered complex of loose boxes and sale rings belonging to the bloodstock auctioneers. The curpark is an education in itself: polished metal, taken off the drivers' hands and slotted into perfect rows by an army of men in maroon bomber jackets. If you're rich, you

SERENA MACKESY



In another life

'A snip at 500,000 guineas.' At Tattersalls' 1996 Yearling Sales, the punters wage a war of nerves, the spectators gawp, the thoroughbreds are nervous. Let the orgy of gambling begin... Photograph by Nick Turpin

see, not only do you never have to change gear by hand, you never have to learn to reverse at all: there will always be someone to do it for you. Walking there from the station, a bit shop-soiled after half an hour on a train full of screaming schoolchildren, was good culture-shock training.

The first thing you notice about the crowd at the Houghton is that they're giving nothing away. This may be a serious spectator sport — on Tuesday there were probably 200 gawpers for every big player involved — but everyone gets into the swing of pretending they're there pitted against each other in a war of nerves. People in headscarves assumed poker faces, muttered to each other out of the corners of their mouths. This was no mean feat: if there's one thing you don't associate with horse people it's soft-spokenness. Generations of making yourself heard across the windy Downs have bred a certain foghorn quality into the equestrian classes, and keeping your voice down if you're one of them is about as easy as keeping your pinks off a pension fund if your name's Bob Maxwell.

The next thing you notice is how clean everything is. The place gleams. Lawns are cropped to within an inch of their lives, a peculiar Romanesque pagoda shines with a whiteness worthy of a Daz doorstep challenge, tarmac is black, black, black. The several hundred boxes are Croscotted into uniformity. Even the trees seem to have had their leaves stapled on for optimum coverage. The odd thing about this is that this is a place designed for horses, and horses, while being nice beasts with many excellent qualities such as nobility, loyalty, speed and enormous teeth, are not renowned for

their cleanliness. There were 75 lots at the sale on Tuesday, and, being highly strung babies, they were jolly nervous. And yet one quickly realised that there was absolutely no need to watch one's step. The place was swarming with men in green coats. They came in pairs. One carried a broom, the other a massive pooper-scooper. The moment some descendant of the Godolphin Arabian expressed its distress, they pounced on the results. This must be one of the great showstoppers in the public bars of Newmarket. What do you do for a living, then?

In the Chifney Restaurant, tea was in full swing. Beneath a huge oil of men in frock coats and topers leaning on canes at the original Tattersall at Hyde Park Corner (the firm was established in 1766), people in Barbour and quilted waistcoats chomped through sponge cake and Marlboros. You could tell the buyers from their advisers at a glance. The members of the horse world wore jeans and V-necked sweaters and those wonderfully ancient tweed jackets only the British can get away with. Those whom they were there to advise were fully kitted out in suits and top-pocket kerchiefs. Their womenfolk were seriously manicured. My mobile phone rang. The 30 people within earshot flung themselves on their handbags.

jumped. He jumped higher, and retreated to the safety of his group. Bloodstock is business like anything else these days. You don't have to actually like horses to buy one.

By the upper sale paddock, knots of potential buyers and faux-buyers watched the yearlings being walked out. There was something a bit pathetic about the thought of all these babies, who have lived their lives so far at home with the people who bred them, plodding trustingly into pantachions to be bartered. I had a bonding session with Lot 28, a chestnut filly by the American stallion Lion Cavern out of a mare who, seriously folks, was called Bint Secreto. She had the kind, clever eye of a good eventer, and kept glancing at me as she went past. She sold later for 46,000 guineas.

Beside me, four men in blazers discussed deals in West Country accents. "She looks like she might be the right sort," said one. "Yes," said another, "but you have to ask why he's selling her now. You have to question his faith in her as a two-year-old."

Inside the sale ring, the auctioneer was warning to his task, dosie-dohing his way through six-figure sums like the leader of a Line-dancing session. He scarcely paused to draw breath as he forced the deadpan bidders to ever more extravagant heights, and his colour rose with the prices as oxygen starvation set in. The auctioneers swapped over every few lots; presumably they then collapsed off-stage, gasping like well-hooked pike. The main performer was surrounded by men in sober suits and Tattersalls ties who signalled to the bidders. I failed to identify a single one of those, so minuscule were their movements. A board behind the auctioneers' heads gave the price in pounds, French francs, marks, US dollars and yen.

The arena was filled with a constant buzz of low-level chat as the horse world went about its business. And over the top of it all, the echo of auction patter: "A right good goer she is at 30,000," cried the auctioneer. "Forty thousand. It's not his value, but he's on the market. I sell him." "At 60,000," he fixed a reluctant bidder with a practised eye, "DON'T STOP NOW!" The crowd seemed sanguine about these sums: a hush only fell when the price rose above the 200,000 level.

In less than half an hour, I watched £1,243,200 change hands. After that I had to go out and get some fresh air and a reality check. By the paddock door, a blazer shook hands with a suit. "You after anything in particular?" asked the suit. "Well," replied the blazer, "there doesn't seem to be that much to buy. But I dare say we'll do some damage before the week's over."

500,000 guineas

Insecticides have ruined health of hundreds of Gulf War veterans, writes Ian Burrell

Syndrome? No - the men were poisoned

Paul Ash went off to war bursting with pride and prepared to die in the cause of bringing down Saddam Hussein.

Last night, he was struggling to come to terms with the possibility that his life had been ruined not by the Iraqis but by pesticide sprayed by the British Army and his own colleagues.

Arriving in the Saudi Arabian desert as a 24-year-old Fusilier, Mr Ash had been alarmed by the ferocity of the local mosquitoes. The insects swarmed off nearby marshlands to enjoy a feeding frenzy on the British troops encamped in the desert.

"We had never experienced anything like it before. The mosquitoes were taking great chunks out of the troops and the lads were coming out in massive blotches," he said.

The Army's response was to bring in thousands of gallons of pesticide which was sprayed liberally onto tents, clothing and vehicles.

Places flew overhead, spewing the chemicals on to the "tent villages", while other soldiers walked around with hand-held sprays to douse their colleagues in the repellent.

Mr Ash said: "It was just like a mist of the stuff. We didn't really have time to take notice of what was going on and nobody told us they were spraying us for a reason. We just assumed it was because of the mosquitoes."

It was only after Ash returned from the war, ostensibly as a hero, to his Northumberland home, that he realised he may not have escaped unscathed.

Suddenly, the once super-fit infantryman was so weak he could hardly walk. He had to give up football and then began to show symptoms of serious illness.

"I was constantly vomiting. I had pains in my joints and my stomach hurt so much I thought I had ulcers."

He left the Army and although he has found work as a local government officer, he is registered as 60% disabled.

Now 29, he greeted yesterday's announcement by the Ministry of Defence with relief: "It is very good that eventually somebody has stood up and said: 'Hang on, we have done something wrong here and we have not investigated it in the manner that we should have'."

"It shows that, five years after the guys first started complaining, the MoD are finally accepting that they may have damaged the lads. But it should have come earlier."

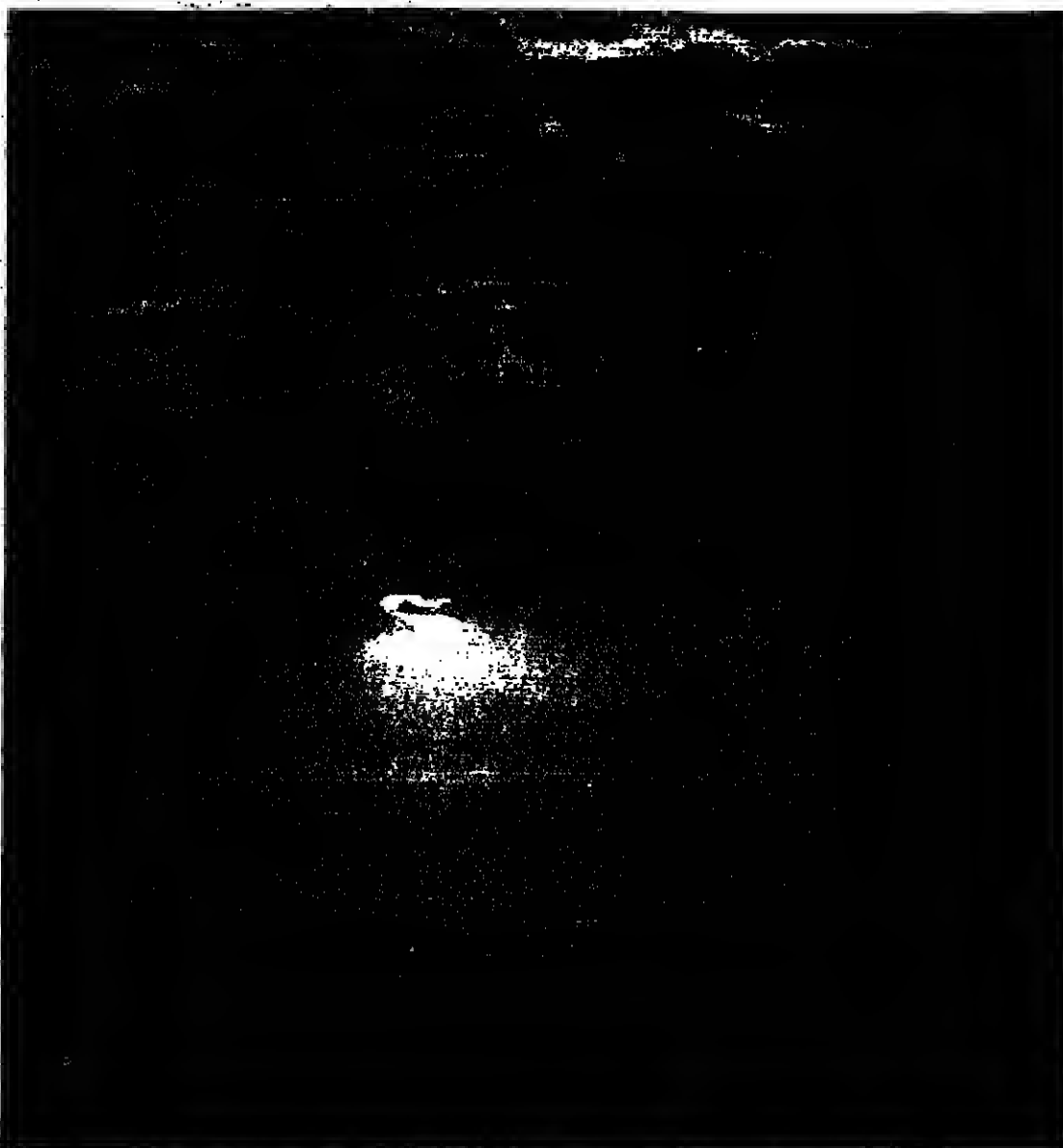
Mr Ash is one of 740 Gulf War veterans suing the Ministry of Defence for compensation for illness they have suffered since returning from the conflict. Those who believe in the so-called Gulf War syndrome say it has caused at least 15 deaths. The families of 30 more Gulf War veterans who have taken their own lives blame the experience of the Gulf for bringing on depression which led to their suicides.

The MoD still refuses to acknowledge that Gulf War syndrome exists.

Nicholas Soames, the armed forces minister, said last year that the veterans' claims were "a mixture of unsubstantiated rumour and incorrect information". His revelation yesterday that "organophosphate pesticides were used more widely in the Gulf than we had previously been led to believe" was seen as a softening in the government stance.

Some veterans blame their listlessness, nausea and aching limbs on the tablets the troops were given to protect them from chemical attack by the Iraqis. Others attribute the symptoms to post-traumatic stress disorder brought on by the war itself.

Mr Ash believes the latest MoD admission is evidence of similarities with the fate of some farmers who have become chronically depressed and violent after being exposed to pesticides used in sheep-dip. "I think there is a definite link," he said.



Soldiers of bad fortune? Allied tanks in Saudi Arabia during the war and (below) Paul Ash today

Victims' battle

FEBRUARY 1991 - The Gulf War ends.

JUNE 1993 - Gulf War Syndrome hits the headlines as Today newspaper reveals that hundreds of soldiers were suffering from bleeding gums, hair and weight loss and facial paralysis. MoD denies the ailment exists.

MAY 1994 - A committee of independent medical experts say that the illness does exist but fail to pinpoint a cause.

NOVEMBER 1994 - 24 British Gulf War veterans have requests for legal aid granted to prepare claims against the MoD. FEBRUARY 1995 - 480 sufferers of the syndrome inform the MoD that they intend to sue for compensation.

APRIL 1995 - Government announces in the Lords that it is not prepared to pay compensation.

JUNE 1995 - Ministry of Defence dismisses Gulf War Syndrome, saying that alleged sufferers are victims of chronic fatigue.

NOVEMBER 1995 - The defence select committee criticises the MoD for being insensitive to the victims of the syndrome.

MARCH 1996 - Tests on veterans shows first physical evidence that the syndrome exists.



Chemicals' deadly side-effects

NICHOLAS SCHOON
Environment Correspondent

Organophosphorous (OP) pesticides are widely used against insects in agriculture. There is growing concern about their long term impacts on human health and the damage they do to nervous systems.

Research is continuing into how they effect peripheral nerves and the brain. In Britain, the fears have mounted because of the hundreds of farmers who appear to have suffered severe, long term illness after using OP sheep dip chemicals.

Dr Goran Jamal, a consultant at the Institute of Neurological Sciences in Glasgow, said: "There's no dispute that there is a short term effect on people exposed to OPs and an intermediate-term effect." First there are flu-like symptoms of lethargy and dizziness, followed by a weakening of the muscles around the hips and shoulders after three days.

Less is known about the more severe long term effects, believed to result from repeated exposure. Dr Jamal said: "There's evidence of physical

damage to the ovaries in the limbs." Furthermore, victims seem to suffer some memory loss, harm to their sense of balance, depression, fatigue and a change of personality which makes them far more prone to rages.

All the pesticides listed by the Government are licensed for use in Britain following toxicity testing on animals. But they should only be used in strict accordance with safety rules, wearing protective clothing and there is evidence that both American and British troops failed to do this in the Gulf

when the pesticides were sprayed. Malathion - which the Ministry of Defence had already admitted taking to the Gulf - is regarded as one of the safest OPs. It can be bought over the counter in chemists for head lice and is a garden pesticide. Dr Jamal said the warnings in the leaflet which accompanies the head lice product were inadequate. Dimethyl phosphorothionate, otherwise known as fenitrothion and azamethiphos are spray insecticides - the latter for killing flies in livestock houses, and Diazinon for use in sheep dips.

Secretive tycoons lose their challenge to privacy laws

Secretive tycoon twins David and Frederick Barclay today lost their High Court challenge to the privacy laws in an action which could have had a devastating effect on TV documentary making.

The pair, said to be worth around £500 million, were angry that they had spent millions buying an uninhabited Channel island and building a gigantic Gothic castle on it - only for it to be "invaded" by a BBC2 television reporter in a small dinghy.

They lodged an immediate protest with the Broadcasting Complaints Commission (BCC) but were told nothing could be done until after any programme was broadcast.

The 61-year-old brothers applied to the High Court for a judicial review of the BCC's interpretation of the part of the Broadcasting Act which governs its powers.

But in a ruling today, Mr Justice Sedley said the law "at present places no general



Island mansion: The Barclay Brothers' home being built on the Island of Breckhou

constraints upon invasions of privacy as such."

He said that the Act "unambiguously limits the power of the BCC to adjudicate upon complaints of infringement of privacy against the BBC arising out of programmes which have been broadcast."

Under the statute governing the BCC's powers, and generally in English law, "the individual is without an effective remedy before a national authority if the right to respect for his or her private and family life is violated". He said the argu-

ment over the right to privacy in English law and its lack of conformity with the European Convention on Human Rights "will doubtless not end here". But he refused leave to appeal because he said the intention of the law was clear.

The issue arose over investigations by BBC journalists for the media programme, *The Spin*, which was eventually broadcast in October 1995 and is now the subject of a complaint to the BCC by the Barclay twins. They had refused permission for a personal interview

and for entry to the island, but reporter John Sweeney went there by small boat and wandered around before being shipped back to Sark.

Mark Shaw, for the BCC, had told the judge: "No doubt there was an invasion. But Parliament has taken the view that a line has to be drawn and that line is after there has been a broadcast. If Parliament had intended the law to apply before a broadcast it would have said so." The Barclays' application, if allowed, would amount to a "gagging order", he said.

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Tipplers who are campaigning to make it always on Sunday Page 5

Prescott on song as week ends in a bang

STEPHEN GOODWIN

John Prescott yesterday wound up Labour's week in Blackpool with a blistering attack on Tory "immorality" and a restatement of the vision of a Decent Society set out by Tony Blair in his keynote speech.

With a mix of variety-club humour exploiting Tory disarray and earnest pledges on creating jobs and social justice, the Labour deputy leader, won a prolonged standing ovation. But the send-off rally was not without hiccup. There was embarrassment when Mr Prescott lost track of his speech and was unable to ad-lib his way through Labour's five key pledges.

"These five pledges are essential," he blustered. "You can see I can't find them." They were set out in giant letters on the wing of the stage set, but Mr Prescott eventually unearthed the prompt card which party campaigners will be using, then rattled off the pledges: "Smaller classes, tough on crime, shorter waiting lists,

more jobs, a stronger economy." More alarming was the explosive interruption to the singing which traditionally closes the conference. "The Red Flag" was delivered with gusto - Tony and Cherie Blair joining in with studied visibility - and delegates were rocking along to D-ream's "Things Can Only Get Better" when there was an overhead explosion.

The music stopped, some in the hall went into a nervous semi-crouch, then confetti began falling from a billow of smoke. As the "Labour X" mini ballot papers floated down, the celebrations stuttered back to life. Officials said later the cannon had been too loud and the music should not have been informed of the stunt.

Mr Prescott delivered the type of speech that has made him a conference favourite. He lavished praise on delegates for their show of unity, bringing together "all strands in the party - old and new - bringing together the politics of ideas and



United we stand: John Prescott being joined at the rostrum by Tony Blair after delivering his rousing send-off speech Photograph: Brian Harris

the politics of organisation". He went on: "This week will go down in history as the week when Labour - a party reborn, proud of its heritage, confident of its future - clearly proved it is ready for government."

The Tories, by contrast, were divided, desperate and danger-

ous, he said. John Major was running scared of Labour, of his own MPs and of an election. Turning on the Prime Minister's call for ethics to come back into politics, Mr Prescott said that for many Tories, morality meant not getting caught. "If John Major is serious about morality, he

should let Nolan look into party funding." Morality was about fairness and social justice. Where was the morality in people being bussed between hospitals or 16-year-olds forced to sleep rough on the streets?

What was really immoral, Mr Prescott said, was a record num-

ber of homeless and hundreds of thousands of workers trapped in unemployment when £5bn from council houses remained locked up. "Labour's coming home. And when we are in government, Cathy can come home too."

Urging on the party foot soldiers, the deputy leader said the

1992 election defeat was burnt into his memory - Neil Kinnock on the steps of Walworth Road conceding defeat with dignity and emotion. "That image will only be extinguished when we see Tony Blair on the steps of 10 Downing Street, announcing a magnificent Labour victory."

'Stake' out as vogue word takes back seat

ANTHONY BEVINS
Political Editor

The Blair buzz word of the year, "stakeholding", virtually vanished from the face of the conference this week, with only a handful of delegates even mentioning the word.

Certainly, Tony Blair did not utter it in his speech on Tuesday, in spite of the fact that the launch of the "stakeholding" project had been heralded as a new phase in Labour's modernisation when the leader made it the centrepiece of a speech in Singapore. In a follow-up speech, he referred to the importance of companies treating their employees as partners.

While the idea of partnership remains, the word, "stakeholding", appears to have died a death. But it did emerge again yesterday when Janet Storer, a delegate from Rutland and Melton, Leicestershire, said: "This is and must remain a stakeholder party, a strong party, with strong leadership which will listen to us."

That prompted Tom Sawyer, the party's general secretary, to tell conference: "The biggest stakeholders for the party are the British people; we hold the party in trust for the people."

But as the conference ended more speakers, on more occasions, had used the word "socialism" than "stakeholding" - a subtle linguistic victory for Old Labour over the modernisers.

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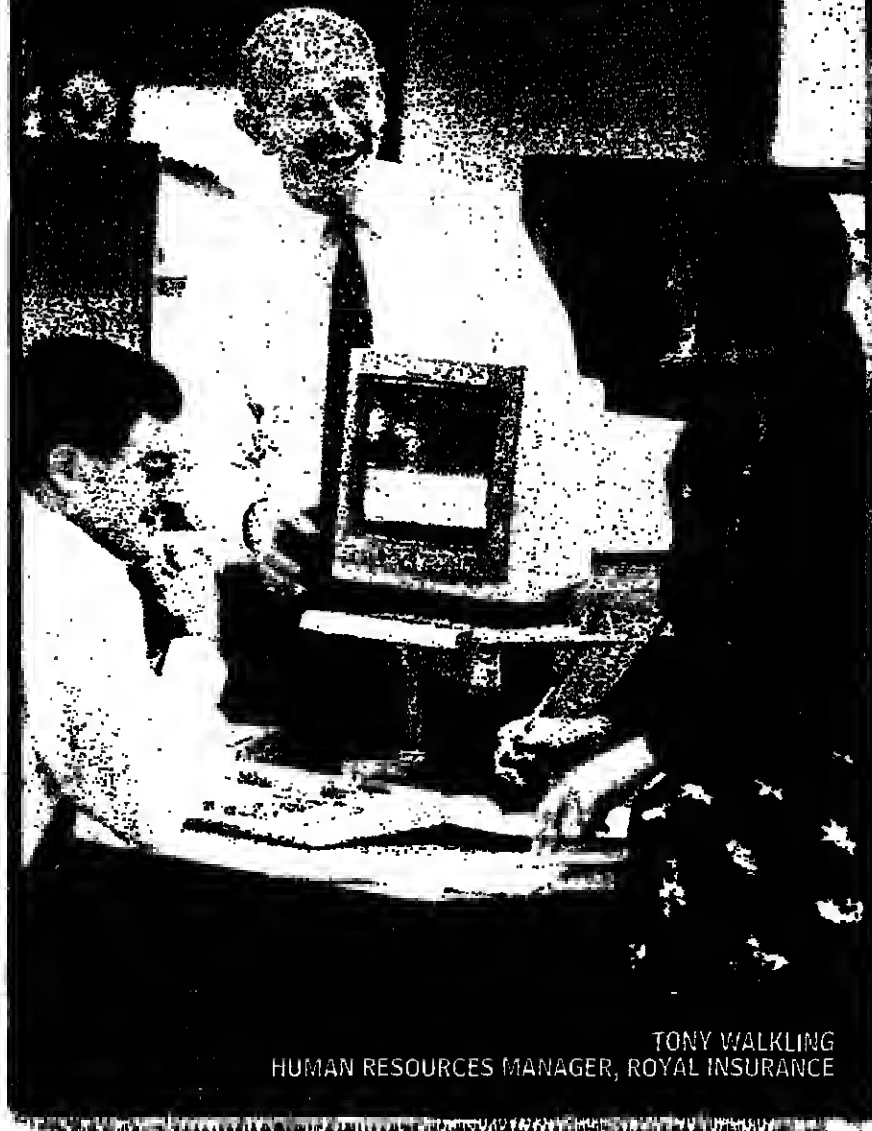
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Party signals end to free debate

STEPHEN GOODWIN

A radical change to Labour's policy making process so that the party conference will not be able to dictate to a Tony Blair government was signalled yesterday by Tom Sawyer, Labour's modernising general secretary.

During a prickly session on party organisation and policy making in which one delegate complained of "dark forces" plotting the conference's demise, Mr Sawyer said Labour could not afford to repeat past conflicts.

"We cannot afford to squander the work we have done now and throw it away with arguments and differences between the party and the [Labour] government."

Moves are already underway to trim the power of the National Executive Committee, but Mr Sawyer yesterday focused on the deficiencies of the conference as a policy making body. "I don't believe that hundreds of people out there, hopefully waving their hands in the air for the possible, but remote, opportunity of having three minutes at this rostrum really does add up to a democratic conference process," he said.

But after several pot-shots were taken at the "centralist" tendencies of the leadership, Mr Sawyer, on a return to the rostrum, said the only way the role of the conference could be altered was by a decision of the conference itself.

"Conference is the policy-making body of the Labour Party. It is set out in the rules and there are no plans to change that," he told sceptical delegates.

For the first time in the party's history, all 400,000 members and 2.5 million union members will have an opportunity to vote on the draft manifesto.

Karen Price, of Neath, said it was "ridiculous" to think that policy could be decided by a "Yes - No" referendum. Activists should not be taken for granted, she said, moving a motion accepted by the leadership to set local policy forums.

Simon McKenna, of Southwark and Bermondsey, hit out at the "dark forces" who wanted to do away with the conference and at the lax stage management. To protests, he said that at future conferences "glamorously clad PPCs will be worshipped by wretched, manacled but smiling constituency delegates".

Joan Abrams, of Hazel Grove, said it was obvious that very few people who disagreed with the platform had been allowed to speak during the week in Blackpool. The party's chances of winning the election might be helped if the leadership could be seen as able to accept criticism and was "not afraid of being defeated occasionally", she said.

LAST WEEK AT THE CONFERENCE

GOOD WEEK... BAD WEEK



Tony Blair for his New Covenant speech and defeat-free conference
Baroness Thatcher lost her frontbench job in the Lords for standing by Ian Greer

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Can't we just go back to Bambi? Or maybe Kim Il Sung's official title? 'The Great Wise Leader, President for Life, Dearly Beloved and Spacious Leader'?" Tony Blair on his nicknames

"Life's better under the Tories - Sounds to me like one of Steve Norris's chat-up lines." John Prescott

SMILE OF THE WEEK

Harriet Harman after retaining her seat on the national executive

JOKE OF THE WEEK

"Someone said to Harriet Harman, 'I've got a problem with the Kastinir'. She replied, 'Take it down to the dry cleaners'." Tribune Rally

EGO TRIP OF THE WEEK

Baroness Castle, 85, and still able to milk the conference while twisting her pensioner's knife in Ms Harman

MYSTERY OF THE WEEK

Identity of the Sierra owner who convinced Tony Blair Labour would lose the 1992 election

SPIN DOCTOR OF THE WEEK

Peter Mandelson, intervening during a live TV interview with Diane Abbott, scribbling notes to the producer

RAPTUREMETER OF THE WEEK

Name	Time	Score
Tony Blair	6 min 9 sec	95 decibels
John Prescott	3 min 42 sec	95 decibels
Robin Cook (foreign affairs)	1 min 39 sec	94 decibels
Gordon Brown (shadow chancellor)	1 min 25 sec	95 decibels
David Blunkett (education)	1 min 15 sec	93 decibels

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news

Fred West house to be demolished

JOJO MOYES

Contractors will begin work on Monday to demolish completely the Cromwell Street home of serial killers Frederick and Rosemary West and a derelict neighbouring building. The street will be sealed off to traffic and a police guard mounted to stop ghoulish souvenir-hunters plundering the house and garden for relics of where Fred West hurried nine of the couple's victims.

Gloucester City Council announced yesterday that it had bought the property, where the Wests lived for two decades, for £40,000 and the neighbouring building for an undisclosed sum.

Contractors will work or 15 days until the last vestiges of the building have gone - the bricks will be removed one by one; the timbers burned, and the fittings melted down. The bricks and mortar are to be crushed, mixed

with other general waste, and then used to fill prepared holes in undisclosed parts of the giant council waste tip at Hempsted, and immediately covered over. At the end of the demolition an inches-thick concrete "cap" will cover the cleared site. The city council said that the strategy of complete destruction was decided on because of the "sensitive nature of the site".

The wrought-iron sign "25 Cromwell Street" which epitomised the House of Horrors is at the centre of a legal tussle. Senior members of the West family are understood to have laid claim to the sign which was removed by Gloucester Police within days of the arrest of Fred and his wife Rosemary - to deter souvenir hunters. It has remained under lock and key at Gloucester's Central Police Station, awaiting a legal decision on its future. Gloucester City Council want it destroyed, but

police must first decide who should be given it.

West, 53, hanged himself on 1 January 1995, in his remand cell at Birmingham Prison while awaiting trial on 12 murder counts. His wife, Rosemary, 42, is serving life imprisonment after being convicted of murdering 10 girls and young women, including her daughter Heather, 16, and eight-year-old stepdaughter Charmaine.

A survey company, Robertson Bell Associates, is to carry out a public consultation exercise on the site's future and will take in views of relatives of victims and local residents. The costs of this and the demolition are expected to reach £40,000. Cash from the sale of the West's home will be sent to the Official Solicitor, who is overseeing Frederick West's estate for the benefit of his five youngest children, four of whom are still in care.



Condemned: A policeman on guard duty at the West house, 25 Cromwell Street. Contractors will begin demolition on Monday Photograph: John Voos

Tories to expand workfare into job blackspots

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

The Government is expected to announce a large expansion of a "workfare"-style scheme next week in which the long-term unemployed must undertake community work or suffer a reduction in state benefit.

Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, is planning to use the Conservative Party conference in Bournemouth to reveal the expansion of the Project Work pilot programmes from the present two schemes into 20 or 30 areas, many of them unemployment black-spots.

Mrs Shephard believes the current projects, in the Hull and Maidstone areas, have been successful in getting the long-term jobless off the register. Out of 4,000 people on the schemes, 181 have taken up employment.

Tory sources also believe that many of the programme participants were claiming benefit while undertaking work in the "black economy". Strategists believe an expansion of the scheme will go down well with Conservative activists at the conference, but will also prove unpopular with the electorate.

The scheme is aimed at "restoring work disciplines" among 18- to 50-year-olds unemployed for two years or

more. The jobless on the programme are granted their benefit plus £10 of expenses.

A 13-week period of counselling and help with job hunting is followed by 13 weeks of work in the community. In both Hull and Maidstone the unemployed have been set to work in old people's homes and on charity projects. Failure to turn up can result in a 20-40 per cent reduction in benefit.

Some critics of the approach believe that the unemployed, most of whom have paid tax in the past, are entitled to benefit without mandatory work schemes. Others attack the programme because it is regarded as expensive.

Mrs Shephard believes that the programme has been successful, but that the Treasury will require more evidence before risking the cost of a nationwide programme.

It is understood that Labour is planning a programme for the jobless which would also involve a "stick-and-carrot" approach. Peter Hain, a Labour employment spokesman, said: "Labour will provide jobs and high-quality training for a quarter of a million young people who are wasting away on the dole."

Project Work, he added, was just a cynical attempt to "boot-leg" people off the dole and make unemployment figures even more bogus.

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It ain't real till the fat lady sings in Italian

Marianne Macdonald on a row over the best language for performing the great operas

Sir Peter Hall, the world-famous opera and film director, spectacularly rekindled the opera language debate yesterday by advocating English National Opera abandon its policy of singing only in English.

His proposal – which from so senior a figure of the opera community detonates the artistic equivalent of a grenade – was immediately rejected by Dennis Marks, ENO's general director.

Sir Peter, who has directed productions at Glyndebourne and Covent Garden, as well as at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and Bayreuth, makes the controversial proposal in ENO's own magazine.

In an article he says that much of the text in opera, even when sung in English, is incomprehensible. The widespread use of surtitles makes it irrelevant to offer an English translation.

"The biggest single revolution in opera in the last couple of decades has been surtitles. They are even now being used in



Sing it like it is: Gwyneth Jones as the Wagnerian heroine Brünnhilde, performed in the original German at the Royal Opera House

Photograph: Laune Lewis

some houses for operas in English – because we have finally admitted that however good the diction and however well the conductor keeps the orchestra down, much of the text is inaudible or incomprehensible," he writes.

"Wouldn't it now be truly revolutionary for ENO to throw away its English language only policy and sing with the verbal sound which the composer had originally heard?"

Sir Peter justifies his argument by citing two productions

staged last season by ENO – David Aldea's *Tristan and Isolde* and Graham Vick's *Fidelio*.

"Musically and dramatically they were extraordinary but I missed many of the words – except of course the spoken dialogue in *Fidelio*."

Surtitles are now widespread in opera. The Royal Opera House offers them above the stage, while the Metropolitan has gone down the more expensive route of installing screens in the back of every chair.

But it is impossible to overcome the problem that an audience reading them will be looking away from the singers.

They are also likely to fall into the comprehension gap – whereby they get jokes in the

text before, or after, they take place on stage. But Mr Marks insisted there was no substitute for being able to follow the sung word directly.

"Anyone who has seen Hall's own revelatory productions of the Mozart/Da Ponte operas at

Glyndebourne (without surtitles) will know how committed he is to opera as drama," he said.

"It is surprising therefore to read him advocating technology that compels the audience to watch drama with its eyes fixed

several yards above the performers' faces.

"The result of this is what someone described as the 'drinking duck' experience, with heads bobbing up and down to grab the odd word here and the odd facial expression there."

Mr Marks said he had gone to *Salome* last year at Covent Garden. "At the moment of climax, when Salome is cradling the head of John the Baptist, I looked around. There was this girl singing and acting her heart out and almost everyone had their eyes fixed five foot above the stage."

He acknowledged, however, that some singers poorly projected the text and that the Glyndebourne's own acoustics were patchy.

"The conservatoires don't train singers to project their voices any more," he added. "And there is not one conservatoire in this country which has a course to teach people to sing in English."

Two years ago ENO rejected a proposal to install surtitles, following the offer by a patron to sponsor them.

Won or lost in translation

ITALIAN: *La Bohème* by Puccini

Rodolfo:

Your roguish eyes have robbed me,
of all my dreams bereft me,
dreams so fair yet so fleeting,
fancies that are no more –

and yet I don't regret them.
For now rosy morning is breaking
and golden love awakes!

Venez con voi pur ora,
ed i miei sogni usati
ed i bei sogni miei,
tosto si dileguano!

Ma il furto non m'accora,
poche vi ha preso stanza
in dolce speranza!

GERMAN: *Tristan and Isolde* by Wagner

Tristan & Isolde:

O eternal night,
Blessed night,
Holy noble
Night of love!

When you enfold us,
When we are blessed,
How could we be wakened
From you without dismay?

O ew'ge Nacht!

Süsse Nacht!

Hehr erhab'ne,
Liebes-nacht!

Wen du umfängst,
Wem du gelachst,
wie – wir ohne Bangen
aus dir er je erwacht?

Source: ENO/ROH Opera Guide series, edited by Nicholas John



Philip Hedley, one of the most political animals in theatre has stolen yet another imaginative march with his latest initiative. The head of The Theatre Royal, Stratford East is extending the £2 concessionary tickets (already the lowest in the country) beyond the unemployed, OAPs, students etc to low-paid workers. He says it follows the announcement of a fourth year of pay freeze for public service workers. "Many now can't afford the leisure activities that they have contributed to through taxes," he says.

It is not just this newspaper that celebrates its 10th anniversary next week. Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber will be presiding over a gala performance of *The Phantom of the Opera* on Wednesday as it clocks up its first decade, in which it has played to full houses every single night. I hear Sir Andrew might overcome his shyness for this occasion and appear on stage. My money is on him tinkling the ivories after the curtain call. But you never know. Keep your eyes peeled as the Phantom nips off his mask.

Ian Hislop, the waspish editor of *Private Eye*, has been asked by the National Gallery to select his favourite picture from its collection and write about it in its bulletin. He chooses Hogarth's *The Marriage Contract*. What could have tickled Hislop's artistic



Ian Hislop: Satire as art

fancy here? Well, he replies: "The only offspring of the union will be a boy with tickets. This is after the groom has caught VD from a child prostitute and then been stabbed when catching his wife in flagranti with the lawyer. The lawyer is executed and she poisons herself, but all this fun is yet to come... Satire really was art in those days."

Jane Lapotaire, just cast as Catherine of Aragon in the RSC's forthcoming production of *Henry VIII*, presents her own one woman show "Shakespeare As I Knew Her" at the New Vic Theatre in Bristol for two weeks from 5 November. Ms Lapotaire says she will start the show, a career retrospective, with a speech from *Romeo and Juliet*. "It will be the first time," she adds, "that Juliet will have been played by someone on hormone replacement therapy."

DAVID LISTER

Why the Prince of Wales is embarking on another divorce. Page 8.

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news

Prince Charles and aide agree to part

The Prince of Wales's private secretary, Commander Richard Aylard, is to leave his service early next year by "mutual decision".

The Prince's press secretary, Sandy Henney, said yesterday that the departure was being confirmed after a newspaper report "to avoid any further unhelpful and inaccurate speculation on the matter".

"We decided to confirm this mutual decision by the Prince of Wales and Commander Aylard, who has been with the Prince for 11 years," a statement said.

It was issued after the Sun told the Press Association it would reveal Cdr Aylard's departure today.

The newspaper said: "The Prince told Cdr Aylard, his right-hand man and best friend, during an emotional meeting at Lockmore, near Inverness, this morning."

It added that Cdr Aylard shouldered much of the blame for the controversial interview with David Dimbleby in which the Prince admitted adultery.

Stuart Higgins, the paper's editor, said: "The parting of the ways is not altogether a



Friends: The Prince is losing Commander Richard Aylard

surprise. There has been growing friction between the two men. There were disagreements over the future strategy and the profile of Camilla Parker Bowles.

The Prince's office denied that Cdr Aylard had been sacked.

"He took over as private secretary in 1991," Ms Henney said. "His initial contract as private secretary was for five years."

"He has said privately that he would leave at some stage when the time was right. There is no other reason for the departure. Both the Prince and

Richard feel the time is right for a change. We hope to announce a successor soon."

Cdr Aylard has been seen as a mainstay of support for the Prince during his separation and divorce.

The former Royal Navy officer joined Buckingham Palace as equerry to the Princess of Wales 11 years ago, moving later to become an assistant private secretary to the Prince before promotion to become his closest aide.

He is thought to have been taking stock of his future in recent months.

In May it emerged that he was to divorce. He and his 46-year-old wife Suzanne, known as Zan, had agreed to part, it was confirmed.

They have two children, Sophie, 10, and Katie, four. The marital home has been in Godalming, Surrey. It was said at the time that no one else was involved in the marriage break-up.

Friends of Cdr Aylard said that he was married to his work and spent more time in the office than at home.

Most weekday nights were said to be spent away from his family at an apartment in Wren House at Kensington Palace.

Unlike many royal aides, he went to grammar school and a red-brick university rather than public school and Oxbridge.

His advice to the Prince to co-operate with the Dimbleby biography and television documentary, which led to the admission of adultery on prime-time television, was said to have put him at odds with "old guard" courtiers.

Since then the long-term relationship between the heir to the throne and Camilla Parker Bowles has attracted increasing attention.

BSE cattle cull backlog creates 'fresh emergency'

JAMES CUSICK

The Government confirmed yesterday that the backlog of cattle waiting to be culled in the programme to eradicate BSE from the British herd is twice as large as previously estimated. The Public Services minister, Roger Freeman, said the size of the backlog, 400,000, was now regarded as a "fresh emergency".

Since the parliamentary announcement in March of the potential biochemical link between BSE and the human equivalent, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, the Government has introduced measures to try and remove BSE from the foodchain. This included a cull of all cat-

tle over 30 months old. The slaughter programme has created a bottle neck in processing culled cattle waiting to go through rendering plants.

Mr Freeman said that 600,000 cattle had been culled since May. The large numbers have meant many carcasses being frozen and stored while waiting to be rendered.

As the British herd continues to reach the 30-month cut-off period, the backlog is increasing. Earlier this week Mr Freeman announced plans to increase the cold store capacity by bringing in up to 1,000 specialist lorry containers and the use of refrigerated ships.

Yesterday Mr Freeman ad-

mitted that the backlog was at crisis point in some regions. The worst affected areas are the South West and the West Midlands. "We can't have animal welfare problems and we can't have farmers going out of business because they cannot afford to keep their cattle over the winter. So we need to double the slaughter rate," he told the Today programme on BBC Radio.

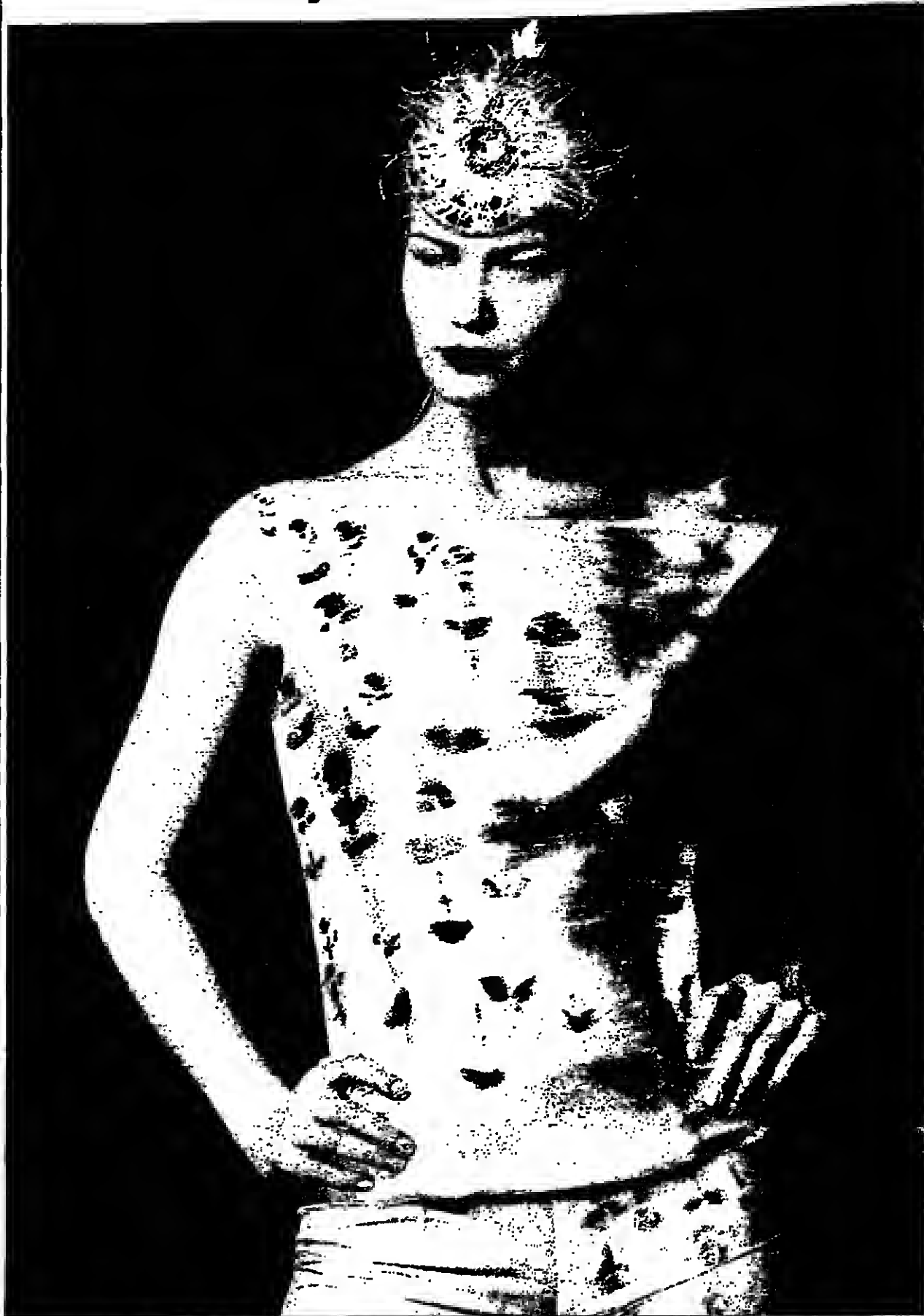
About 33,000 cattle are being culled each week. Despite the backlog, the inability of the rendering plants to cope, and the shortage of cold store space, Mr Freeman said the cull rate was being increased to 55,000 per week. He added: "Some priority will have to be

given not only to particular cases where there are animal welfare problems, but where farmers have been waiting some considerable time."

A further selective cull was agreed by the Government at the European Union summit in Florence in June. This was designed to slaughter beasts from herds considered more at risk from BSE. There are now question marks over whether this additional cull will go ahead.

It is understood that the Government has undertaken trials on the mix of cattle parts which are frozen and which go direct to renderers. Until now whole carcasses have been frozen.

At the ready for seasons in the sun



Coming up roses: Argentine supermodel Valeria Mazza showing off an outfit from the Blumarine spring/summer '97 ready-to-wear collection at the Milan Fashion Show yesterday. Photograph: Paolo Cocco

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THE INDEPENDENT

Mozambique swaps war for a new slavery

Maputo — "I've come to dance for the Kafir," revealed the skinny-hipped stripper on the short flight from Johannesburg to Maputo, her first trip out of South Africa.

Convinced that Maputo was a South African-style, tribal homeland, she gasped at the Mozambican capital's high-rise buildings and the miles and miles of deserted golden beaches to the north and south.

Looking forward to the "Kafir" audience — less crude than the fat Boers she danced for back home — she was in for another surprise. In Maputo these days, and particularly on a holiday weekend, white South Africans are just as likely as Mozambicans to be ogling.

Before Mozambique's devastating 16-year civil war, Lourenço Marques, as Maputo was known, was where South Africans came to escape the corset-tight morality of home and experience racially-mixed thrills. Now the war is over, ordinary South Africans are returning. They are coming not just to play, but to set up shop.

Living next door to Africa's economic giant is a mixed blessing for Mozambique, one of the world's poorest countries and one left bankrupt by war.

The old South Africa, whose policy of destabilising its neighbours included backing Mozambique's Renamo rebels, regularly mounted military raids across the border.

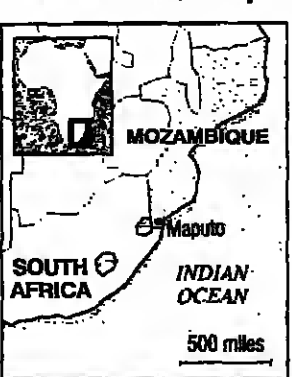
In Maputo, the post-apartheid South African inva-

Having rich South Africa as a neighbour is a mixed blessing, writes Mary Braid

sion is expedited out by tanks but by Land Rover Discovery four-wheel drives.

As the city takes its first faltering steps on the road to recovery, it is the Land Rover owners who are opening restaurants and starting businesses.

The Polana hotel, recently re-



furnished, is the jewel in the investors' crown. At weekends it is stuffed with South African tourists and on weekdays it operates like a luxury base camp for South African investors.

Some welcome their rich neighbour. At the Costa do Sol restaurant, on the coast, 200 Polana guests are being unloaded. It creates a peculiarly Mozambican tourist scene; the white South African army marching towards white-clothed tables, watched by poor Mozambicans who live on the

beach. Nearby is a local bride, all white satin and tiara, swinging Fanta from a can during a break from seaside wedding pictures.

South African visitors have already paid for the Costa do Sol's first refurbishment in years, delighting its owner. But some mutter darkly about colonisation. They complain that the majority of South Africans come up for the weekend in their 4x4s, laden with provisions. "They buy nothing from us and use us like a playground," said one local man. "They destroy the sands with their vehicles and shoot locals off the beach."

While much is made of Mozambique's potential to develop into one of the world's premier eco-tourist locations, further up the coast South African entrepreneurs are reportedly taking advantage of the post-war administrative vacuum and setting up illegal tourist enterprises. "Few politicians will say it in public but South Africa is going to eat us up," one Mozambican warned.

This resentment may increase. For this is just a vanguard. The new \$6 trillion Mozambique Corridor Development, in which South Africa and Mozambique are partners, aims to boost trade between the two countries by improving road, rail and communications links be-



Rich man's playground: South African tourists and business people are flocking back to a Mozambique bankrupted by war. Photograph: Katz Pictures

tween Johannesburg and Maputo and breathing life into the moribund Maputo port, which operates at a tenth of its pre-war capacity. In the next three years, the aim is to increase traffic from 25,000 to 100,000 containers, offering South Africa, as well as Swaziland and Zim-

babwe, as an alternative to the congested port of Durban.

Economic enslavement to a stronger neighbour is a legitimate fear. But South Africa has many reasons to help Mozambique. A more prosperous Mozambique may stem the flood of illegal immigrants. The

ANC is also grateful for its support during the apartheid years. President Nelson Mandela is even believed to have lobbied for Mozambique to join the Commonwealth.

Some investors want to do more than make a quick buck. The previous South-African

regime may have helped devastate the country, but many young South Africans are caught up in the romance of rebuilding it.

Tourism could aid Mozambique's recovery but until the infrastructure improves, further economic expansion is impos-

sible. Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano recently complained that South Africa is making inroads into neighbours' markets without opening up its own. But Mozambique, the poorest and weakest kid on the block, is in no position to shout too loudly.

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Europe cool on Africa taskforce

JOHN FOLLAIN
Reuter

Paris — Senior US officials have visited European capitals including Paris and London to rally support for plans to set up an all-Africa crisis force, but they met a lukewarm response, officials said yesterday.

French and EU officials said a 12-person delegation, including a representative of Washington's National Security Council, met an adviser to President Jacques Chirac last month but EU powers judged the plan to be too vague.

The US embassy said Mr Chirac's African affairs adviser, Michel Dupuch, had received an inter-agency American delegation on 17 September, which also toured London and Brussels among other European capitals. "Both sides (the US and France) agreed it would be useful to refine our thinking further and to stay in touch," an embassy spokeswoman said.

US Assistant Secretary of State, George Moose, briefing

reporters ahead of Secretary of State Warren Christopher's first trip to sub-Saharan Africa next week, said on Thursday he hoped the force could be put in place fairly quickly. In the event of a crisis on the continent, its role would be to establish safe havens for civilians rather than engage in fighting or separate warring factions.

A French Foreign Ministry spokesman, Jacques Rummelhardt, reacting cautiously, said it "should be compared to the various ideas being debated. The recent American ideas will contribute to these discussions and should be studied very closely". He was referring to plans being studied by the UN, the Organisation of African Unity, the French and British governments, and the Western European Union (WEU).

"The Americans did not come here to Europe, and then go on to Africa, with fully worked out proposals. As the proposals stand now they are a little vague," said one Western European official.

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international



Lucky escape: A seven-year-old girl flees an overturned car after a Douglas County Sheriff's Department marksman shot the man who took her hostage. The kidnapper led the police on a 100mph chase through Oregon before he crashed the car at Metz Hill. Photograph: AP

Paradise lost as prince plans new Marbella

Elizabeth Nash reports on a royal attempt to change the planning rules for the rich.

Madrid — Prince Alfonso de Hohenlohe, the playboy and property magnate who reinvented Marbella as a playground for the super-rich, is on the point of developing a luxury tourist complex by the Coto Donana, a nature paradise protected by the United Nations, after paying huge sums for a small Socialist council to change the rules.

The socialist mayor of the south-western town of Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Agustín Cuevas, said last week that his council had accepted up to 80m pesetas (£400,000) from the prince's property company to revise local planning regulations. "We haven't received messages from any court that this is illegal, and

if it hadn't happened, the local people would have had to pay."

The Austro-Spanish prince submitted plans in 1990 to build 1,200 luxury flats, two hotels, a tennis club, a golf course and a polo field on scenic uplands in the town, which is noted for its manzanilla sherry. He expected to obtain planning permission within a month, but fierce local opposition has blocked it for more than six years. "I was misled," he said recently. "In Marbella I can sort these problems out within 24 hours."

By late 1991, the prince had bought out most of the 70 smallholders who tended their manzanilla vines on slopes overlooking the Guadalquivir estuary, one of the most precious wetlands in Europe and breeding ground for more than 250 species of migrating birds.

While awaiting permission, he ripped up the vines, leaving bleak and dusty scrubland that is now thick with thistles. Ms Lola Yllescas, spokeswoman for Andalucía's Ecologist and Pacifist Confederation (Cepa) says the proposed Sanlúcar Golf and Country Club will harm both the national park and farmers by hastening the decline in the region's water table.

In August 1991, Mayor Cuevas, believing the project would bring jobs and prosperity to the region, allowed the prince's company, Tenfa, to pay for the revision of local building regulations, reclassifying his farmland site as building land. Ms Yllescas claims this "sinister deal" amounted to bribery.

But the site lies within the buffer around the Donana national park, and the Andalusian regional government has the last word. The park itself is administered by Madrid. Mr Cuevas is pressing the conservative regional government to exempt Sanlúcar from the protective restrictions of the buffer zone. But such a proposal, put to the Andalusian cabinet last week, was unexpectedly withdrawn. "I think the regional authority was afraid of the scandal that would blow up if they tampered with regulations affecting the national park," said Juan Clavero, a local biologist and environmental campaigner.

A week before, conservationists received unexpected backing from the conservative environment minister, Isabel Tocino, who said she "viewed

with concern anything that diminished the area protecting the Donana national park". But Mr Cuevas insists the prince will soon be granted the permission he wants.

The pretty fishing village of Marbella became popular in the 1950s and 60s. Rich Americans, minor European royals, aristocrats and film stars fluttered round Prince Hohenlohe's hotel, the Marbella Club, which one former *habitué*, Veronica Jay, recalls as "a jolly place". A slightly faster crowd of "beautiful people" preferred Torremolinos, along the coast. But by the late 70s and 80s, Torremolinos was stifled by package tours, and rich Arabs began moving into Marbella, including the Syrian millionaire arms dealer Monzer Al Kassar. At this point, sniffs Ms Jay: "People with class moved west along the coast to Sotogrande".

Personifying today's flamboyantly vulgar Marbella — which must contain the densest concentration of powder-blue suede fringed cowboy boots in Europe — is the city's right-wing mayor, Jesus Gil y Gil. Mr Gil, once imprisoned, then pardoned by the former dictator Franco, for building an apartment block that collapsed and killed more than 50 people, now enjoys enormous local support.

Mr Gil has welcomed the latest wave of rich settlers — the Russian mafia — whose taste and wealth has swiftly made its mark upon Marbella. To escape these excesses, the prince seeks to recreate the Costa's erstwhile exclusiveness in the unspoilt terrain around Sanlúcar, and make another fortune.

But the difference between then and now, says Miss Jay, is that "in those days, nice people had masses of money. Nowadays it's all funny money."



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IN TOMORROW'S
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international

Dublin summit: Low-key meeting hopes to boost progress on preparing 'Maastricht II'

Leaders set to scale down EU reforms

SARAH HELM
Brussels

Europe's leaders meet in Dublin today in the latest of a series of attempts to breathe life into flagging negotiations aimed at re-writing the Maastricht treaty.

The leaders are expected to reaffirm their determination to produce a draft treaty on so-called "Maastricht II" reforms in time for the end of the Irish Presidency in December. However, it is widely expected that today's meeting will have markedly lower expectations about the scope of the treaty.

Furthermore, there is likely to be growing pressure in Dublin for many major decisions on the rebuilding of Europe to be delayed until a "Maastricht III" conference, after the introduction of a single currency in 1999.

A low-key summit in Dublin will please John Major, as the Prime Minister is anxious to avoid conflicts over Europe on the eve of the Conservative Party conference. Mr Major is expected to use the Dublin platform to reassert his determination to call for a review of the powers of the European Court of Justice and changes in the common fisheries policy.

Although European Monetary Union is not on today's agenda, Mr Major is certain to be asked about recent European scepticism calls for Britain to rule out joining a single currency. Any signs in Dublin that other European leaders now wish to defer plans for far-reaching moves towards greater political

union will be welcomed also by the Labour Party.

Under the initial reform timetable, agreement on re-writing the Maastricht treaty, within the current Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC), was to have been finalised in June next year. A Labour victory at the general election would give Mr Blair only a few weeks to decide whether to sign up to far-reaching decisions on deeper power-sharing.

Today's mini-summit was called by heads of government in June in order to boost progress in the IGC which was



Kohl: Resisted further IGC

launched in March, and aims to prepare Europe for enlargement to up to 27 members.

The discussions were expected to produce agreement on far-reaching changes to Europe's institutions and decision-making. Among the subjects on the agenda are proposals for an increase in the use of majority voting, more powers for the European Parliament, and more shared

decision-making in areas of home affairs and justice, as well as in foreign policy.

However, the negotiations have so far been hampered on several fronts. Political leaders have been wary of hurrying for fear of alienating public opinion which, in several member states, has displayed growing scepticism about the need for greater power-sharing in Europe.

And the task of re-writing treaties and re-building institutions in readiness for the accession of new members is proving monumental. Reaching agreement among the 15 on sensitive issues which involve further reduction in sovereignty is equally arduous.

At the same time, Germany and France, the prime movers in the integrationist drive, have been preoccupied with preparing Europe for monetary union, and both countries face elections in 1998. Paris has led calls in recent weeks for the IGC agenda to be limited, to ensure that agreement – even on a small scale – can be finalised in June next year, well ahead of the French parliamentary elections. The French then favour holding another, broader IGC at a later date.

Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, has resisted such a move, fearing that to defer the wider decisions would slow the momentum towards deeper political union. However, this week Mr Kohl signalled that he too is now prepared to consider the idea of holding a further "Maastricht III" conference at a later date.



War games: Children playing in Sarajevo after Bosnia Herzegovina and Yugoslavia agreed full diplomatic links almost a year after the Dayton peace accords. The inaugural session of the newly elected three-man presidency and the House of Representatives takes place in the city today

Italy is offered words of comfort

ANDREW GUMBEL
Rome

To look at Jacques Chirac and Romano Prodi at their bilateral summit meeting in Naples yesterday, one could not have guessed at the slightest hint of disagreement between them. France and Italy, they said, both hoped to join the single European currency on its launch date in January 1999.

Both countries, they said, would do their utmost to bring the lira back into the European monetary system as soon as possible. Mr Prodi, the Italian Prime Minister, said they were in "perfect agreement", while President Chirac shrugged off a row sparked earlier this week by his hostile remarks about Italy as "a ridiculous misunderstanding".

For a country that only three days ago was being dismissed as a second-class citizen of the new Europe and a co-hoper on monetary union, Italy has finished the week in surprisingly upbeat mood. With its government preparing to slash a record 62.5 trillion lire off next year's budget in an all-out effort to bring the country's public finances into line with the Maastricht convergence criteria, Mr Prodi has now received the support not only of the French President but also of Michel Camdessus, head of the International Monetary Fund.

"Italy is making a major effort to push through a budget which, if carried out in full, will make it possible to bring the budget deficit down to 3 per cent of GDP (gross domestic product) by the end of 1997 as stipulated by Maastricht," Mr Camdessus said.

Such words of comfort came as a relief to Mr Prodi at the start of a month-long debate on the budget in the Italian parliament. An international thumbs-down would have damaged not only the credibility of the austerity package, but also the stability of his government.

But who is right, the Chirac of last Tuesday who said Italy would never make the single currency on time, or the Chirac of yesterday who praised Mr Prodi's "vigorous and courageous efforts" to rein in Italy's public finances?

"The prevailing attitude is to count nobody out and count nobody in, but to wait and see what happens," one European Union diplomat said. "Nobody wants to praise or rubbish this budget until they see what effect it has."

That would suggest that Mr Chirac's attack on Italy was a gaffe, pure and simple. On closer inspection, his hostility looks more visceral than the result of careful economic analysis, the fear that a competitively valued lira would take away precious French export markets.

There are perhaps two main lessons to be drawn from the week. The first is that the Italians can take nothing for granted, even if they are members of the G7. The second is that Europe is far from a unified entity, and the road to monetary union is likely to be fraught with the conflicting interests of member states. Italy will not just need a healthy economy to swap the lira for the euro, it will need to keep a keen eye out for its backstabbing neighbours.

Politicians and media fiddle while city is engulfed by orgy of public works and millennial Vatican zeal

All of a sudden, Rome is full of holes. In an uncharacteristic fit of reforming zeal, the city's telephone, gas, and electricity companies have come to the simultaneous conclusion that their underground pipes and cables are in urgent need of renewal, and the city council has seen fit to let them all start digging at once. The result is not so much chaos – the normal state of things around here, after all – as beyond chaos.

Piazza Venezia, the central hub of the whole city, has two holes in the middle and others along the edges. Via Nazionale, the main thoroughfare leading up to the station, has one enormous hole snarling up a major traffic junction and a couple of other medium-sized ones. Viale Trastevere, one of the main arteries leading south from the Tiber, is already a lung succession of holes.

And, as if the shenanigans of

the utility companies were not enough, traffic along the river has been brought to a standstill by an enormous hole being dug on one of the city's busiest bridges to lay down a new tramline.

Overall, there are so many holes that nobody has managed to make an accurate count of them, although rumour has it that the council is working up towards a grand total of 500. That means 500 extra traffic jams a day in a city already on the verge of an automotive breakdown. Not to mention 500 new things for the notoriously short-tempered Romans to huse their tempers about.

It is not a pretty sight. Usually, big Italian cities undertake repair work of this kind during the summer holidays, or else



conduct it piecemeal so that it is barely noticed. Even Naples, usually the most anarchic metropolis in the land, is managing to build itself a new metro with minimal fuss above ground.

But the Roman authorities took the curious decision to start the work at the end of August, just when everyone – including, presumably, the workers they intended to employ – was coming back from a month at the beach. Nothing like forcing Romans to return to work, and then making it almost impossible for them to get to their workplace, to create a really ugly mood.

The good news is that the holes were dug with commendable efficiency, bringing the city to a standstill in a matter of hours. The bad news, though, is that the workers were tired after their initial heroic labours and most of the holes have stayed open, forlorn and exposed, long beyond their due closing date.

"What we still want to know is: where have all the workers gone?" asked the Rome daily *Il Messaggero* for the umpteenth time this week. Ever since the holes appeared, the media and politicians have played a high-

ly entertaining, but thoroughly vicious, game of cat-and-mouse.

One day, the municipality will admit a few lapses and announce a new, Stakhanovite timetable for the workers to re-fill the holes; the next day, the papers will gleefully provide updates on the pathetic rate of progress and report how almost nobody was at their posts when they were supposed to be.

Admittedly, the city council has a near-impossible task. Romans are among the least grateful recipients of civic nuisance in the world, and would probably complain if they were offered free pizza and a daily beer allowance.

What's more, this is a place where orders from above are routinely disregarded and public-sector workers spend more

energy on the football pools than they do on the job, so getting the holes filled on time was never going to be easy.

Last Thursday, the city's commissioner of public works, Esterino Montino, issued a damning report in which he complained of woefully undermanned and ill-equipped building sites. Alongside the presidential palace, he said, one repair team was reluctantly filling in a hole "with a mechanical spade no bigger than a tablespoon".

The commissioner went to the city prefect, and the prefect told workers that if they didn't get their act together to meet the targets, working around the clock if necessary, they would be fined.

New night-time work sched-

ules were announced, and new deadlines fixed, including the closure of a series of holes by last weekend.

"I wouldn't bet a bottle of Coke that they'll do it," said the head of the city consumer association, Carlo Rienz. And, sure enough, they didn't.

Only a handful of workers stayed up on Saturday night in Piazza Venezia, while in the rest of the city the holes remained as deserted as ever.

All of which makes the city shudder about the next four years, when it is supposed to be launching a veritable orgy of public works projects in preparation for the Vatican's millennial Jubilee.

We're talking a new metro, 50 new churches, buildings, community centres and tourist facilities. A Holy Year it will be, in more senses than one.

Andrew Gumbel

Public sector workers here spend more energy on football pools than on the job

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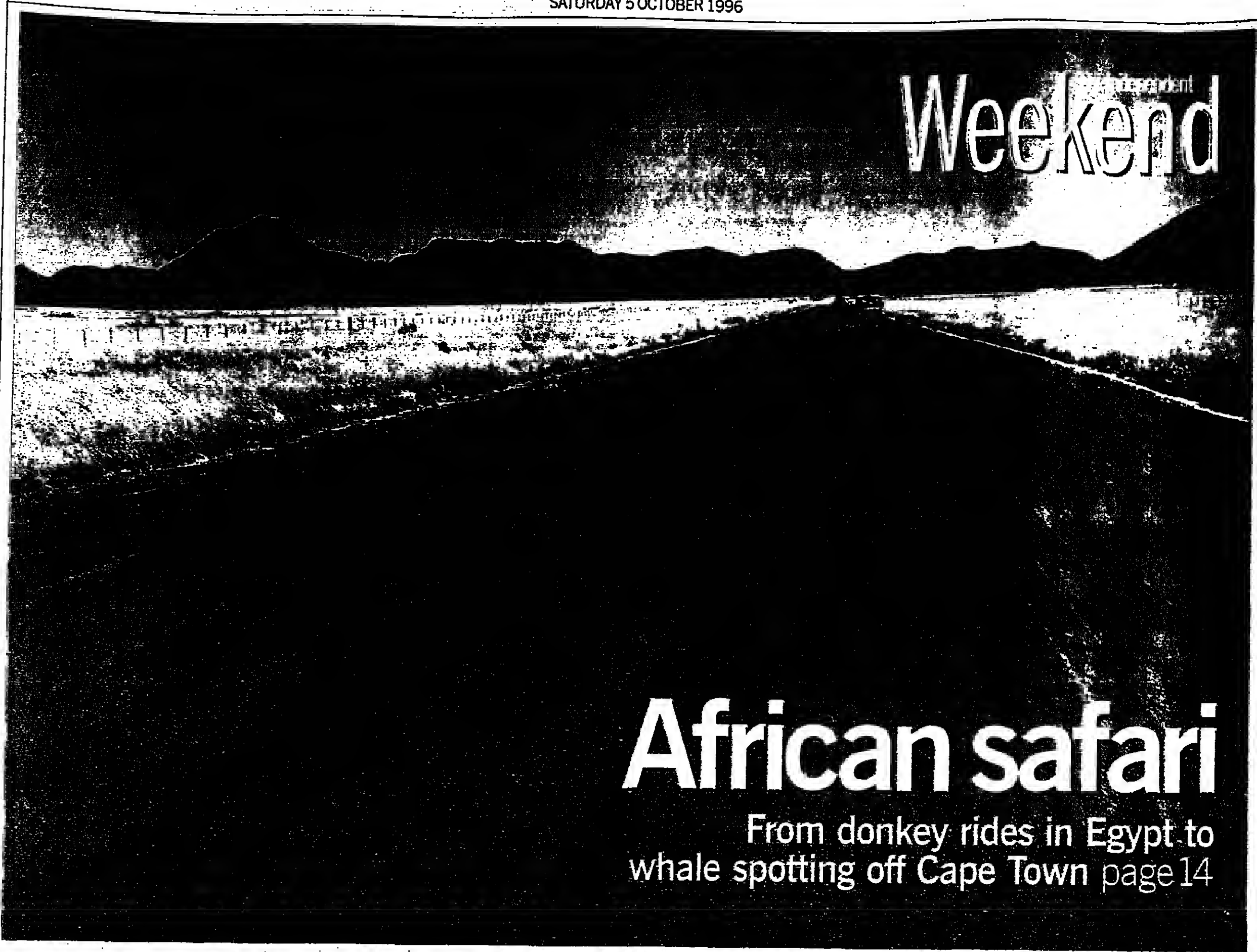
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Weekend



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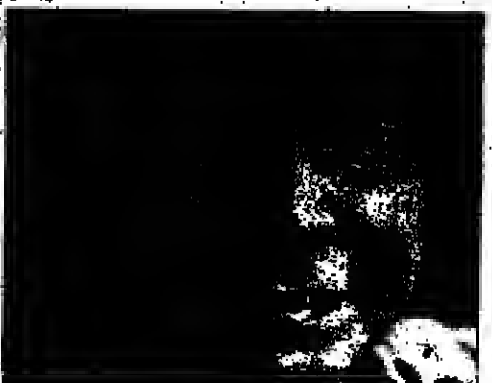
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	£10,000	116.03	139.89	219.30	129.96	156.67	245.62
	£5,000	58.02	69.94	109.65	64.98	78.34	122.81
13.9%	£15,000	188.05	228.83	369.56	209.93	250.01	378.43
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living

Don't dismiss the craziness of modern artists — they go where six-year-olds fear to tread

The logic of complete freedom leads to the madhouse," Simon Rattle recently said in his television programme about 20th-century music. It wasn't easy to see from the context exactly how we should read this remark — was it merely a paraphrase of Schoenberg's anxiety, an attempt to describe the vertigo of a composer newly liberated from traditional harmonies? Or were we to read it as a self-evident statement of truth? Plenty of people would happily subscribe to the latter view, in particular those who think that the tidal ebb of aesthetic obedience in the current century has exposed a slimy expanse of junk-dotted mud. It is very easy to turn the remark from a reminder that the true artist is always disciplined (even if they invent a new discipline) into a philistine sneer at artists whose work is not underwritten by traditional methods — a different way of saying that the lunatics have taken over the asylum.

Rattle's remark came to mind when I was looking at Antony Gormley's *Field*, a startling and thought-provoking installation at the Hayward Gallery. The work consists of around 40,000 little clay figures, crudely moulded into a rough approximation of a body, each with two indented holes for eyes. What makes people gasp when they face the room in which these homunculi are arrayed is not the quality of each individual figure. You could say of them, calling up another commonplace aggression against modern art, that "my six-year-old could do that". Indeed, this judgement is incontrovertible — Gormley used ordinary people to help make his figures, including children, whose smaller hands have produced infants for this wondrous population. But what exactly would you think if your six-year-old had done this — if every spare minute was bent to the creation of little figures, which were then neatly arranged in a bedroom to

THOMAS SUTCLIFFE



cover all horizontal surfaces? You would, surely, call a psychiatrist, even if your parental indulgence lasted beyond the 1,000 mark. Encountered anywhere but in an art gallery such behaviour — obsessive and fixated — would call for a clinical explanation, not a critical one.

And there are incontrovertibly great artists who have gone even further in the pursuit of a single goal — both Mondrian and Giacometti might serve as examples of artistic compulsion that could easily look deranged if the inspection had different motives in mind — if the viewer was a psychiatric social worker and the paintings and sculptures were to be found in a

cluttered bed-sit. Both those artists worked with traditional media but the almost limitless definition of what might now count as art has greatly expanded the repertoire of derangement. It isn't very difficult to find a contemporary artist to match almost any pathological symptom. Some mentally ill people collect their own faeces — so did Pietro Manzoni, in numbered tin-cans which he then sold to collectors. Some people suffer from a condition called dysmorphophobia, additively visiting plastic surgeons to alter their appearance — so does the artist Orlan, who records her grisly transformations on videotape.

This raises an obvious problem of discrimination. Coming out of the Hayward, I passed a homeless man pushing a railway trolley stacked with an office chair and a section of timber-veneered partition wall. Given an articulate rationale about these objects — an interest in "the fragility of the permanent", say, or an exploration of

"communal loneliness" — as well as a gallery willing to endorse his vision, there is no reason why such an assemblage might not figure as an art installation. Indeed, the reason why most galleries would probably refuse is that it would be a bit old hat. Been there, done that.

Such facts are taken by conservatives as evidence for the general debasement of contemporary art. They aren't, but they do suggest that the viewer's duty of judgement begins rather earlier than it did in the 19th century, when the threshold question was not "is this art at all?" but "is it any good?" For my money, Orlan urgently needs to see a doctor, not another surgeon. But such cases shouldn't blind us to the fact that for some fine artists, "the road to the madhouse" has turned out to be a fascinating excursion, not a hideous wrong-turning.

From next week, this column will appear on Thursdays

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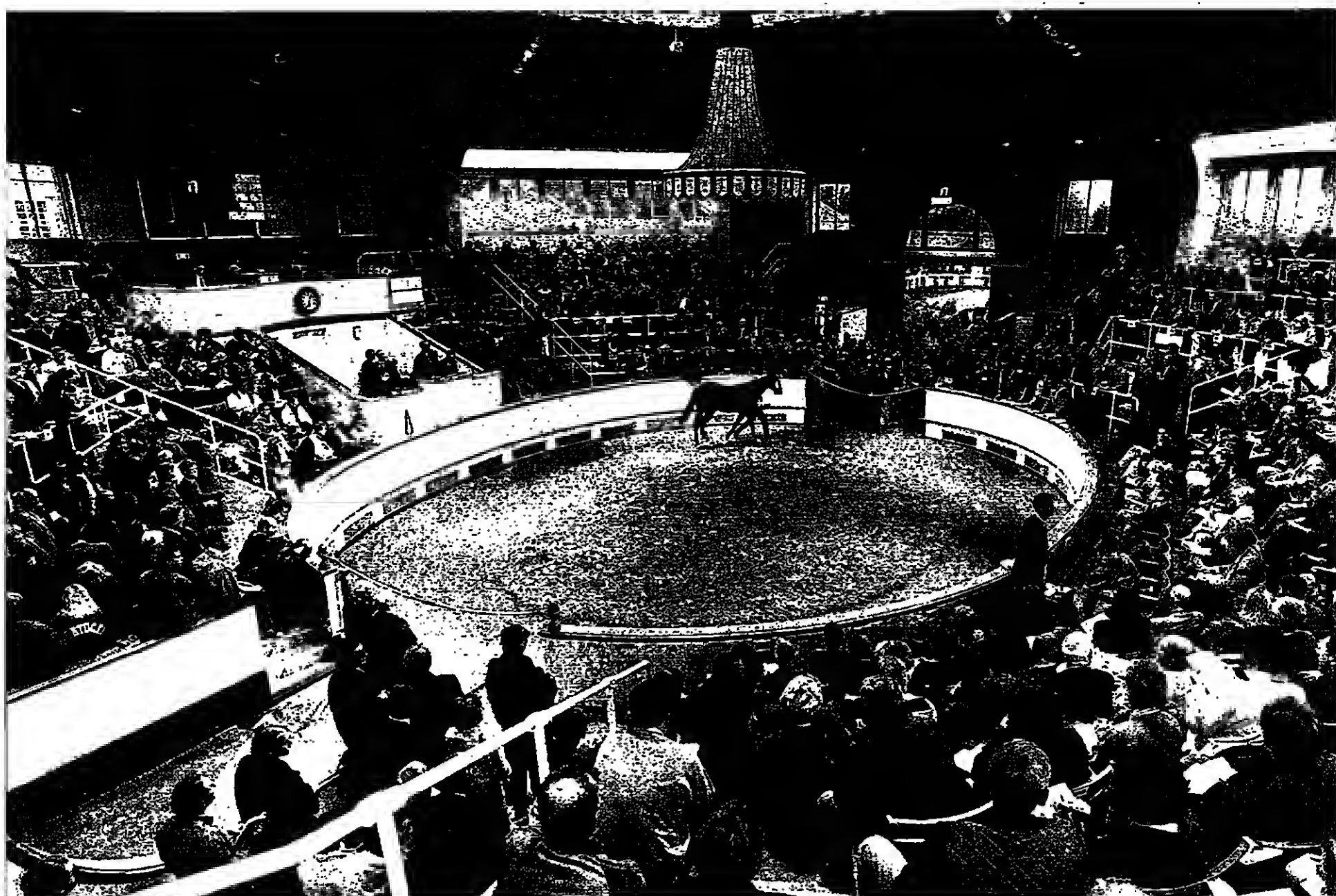
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cover photo: Robert Harding



Filthy rich and on the hoof

On Wednesday Mr Wafic Said, the widely respected Syrian philanthropist and friend to the stars, laid out a little loose change on a couple of new toys. That other people regard the price of a mansion in Wundsworth as loose change is sobering to contemplate but, then, war has been pretty profitable over the past decade and there's plenty of the old lucre to go around for those in the know. Mr Said's introductions of friends to friends may have led him to unsavoury places, but you don't get to be a major player in the racing world without making sacrifices.

The setting for these particular sacrifices was Newmarket, spiritual home of all thoroughbreds, and the scene was Tattersalls' 1996 Houghton Yearling Sales. Bidding through one Tim Bulwer-Long, Said bought a couple of colts: a son of Nashwan out of Music and Dance and the product of a tryst between Sadlers Wells and the American mare Impatiente. The first was a snip at 400,000 guineas; the second a very reasonable 500,000. Guineas, of course, add up: 500,000 guineas in real money is £525,000. Whoops, better make another introduction.

It's been a good year for Tattersalls. In just over three hours' hard selling on Tuesday evening, £7,136,850 changed hands. This was an increase of £2,856,000 on the same night last year. Racing, like every other luxury occupation, has been hit hard by the recession, but those green shoots of recovery were twining themselves round everyone in the business this week. Fifty-three per cent of this cash was accounted for by Wafic Said, Sheikh Mohammed, John Magnier and Michael Tabor. Dealer Demi O'Byrne, bidding on behalf of Tabor and Magnier, scraped up 880,000 hard-earned guineas for a colt by Kingmambo. This staggering price was, in fact, only the equal 10th highest price ever achieved at the sales. Prices haven't gone into seven figures since 1988, when Classic Thoroughbreds handed over 2,400,000 guineas for a colt called Classic Music, brother of Sadlers Wells. The horse never raced, and died in 1993 after two seasons at stud. An excellent investment for anybody's money.

This orgy of gambling on a scale that puts Monte Carlo to shame takes place in the immaculate Park Paddocks, a faultlessly mown and pampered complex of loose boxes and sale rings belonging to the bloodstock auctioneers. The curpark is an education in itself: polished metal, taken off the drivers' hands and slotted into perfect rows by an army of men in maroon bomber jackets. If you're rich, you

SERENA MACKESY



In another life

'A snip at 500,000 guineas.' At Tattersalls' 1996 Yearling Sales, the punters wage a war of nerves, the spectators gawp, the thoroughbreds are nervous. Let the orgy of gambling begin... Photograph by Nick Turpin

see, not only do you never have to change gear by hand, you never have to learn to reverse at all: there will always be someone to do it for you. Walking there from the station, a bit shop-soiled after half an hour on a train full of screaming schoolchildren, was good culture-shock training.

The first thing you notice about the crowd at the Houghton is that they're giving nothing away. This may be a serious spectator sport — on Tuesday there were probably 200 gawpers for every big player involved — but everyone gets into the swing of pretending they're there pitted against each other in a war of nerves. People in headscarves assumed poker faces, muttered to each other out of the corners of their mouths. This was no mean feat: if there's one thing you don't associate with horse people it's soft-spokenness. Generations of making yourself heard across the windy Downs have bred a certain foghorn quality into the equestrian classes, and keeping your voice down if you're one of them is about as easy as keeping your pinks off a pension fund if your name's Bob Maxwell.

The next thing you notice is how clean everything is. The place gleams. Lawns are cropped to within an inch of their lives, a peculiar Romanesque pagoda shines with a whiteness worthy of a Daz doorstep challenge, tarmac is black, black, black. The several hundred boxes are Croscotted into uniformity. Even the trees seem to have had their leaves stapled on for optimum coverage. The odd thing about this is that this is a place designed for horses, and horses, while being nice beasts with many excellent qualities such as nobility, loyalty, speed and enormous teeth, are not renowned for

their cleanliness. There were 75 lots at the sale on Tuesday, and, being highly strung babies, they were jolly nervous. And yet one quickly realised that there was absolutely no need to watch one's step. The place was swarming with men in green coats. They came in pairs. One carried a broom, the other a massive pooper-scooper. The moment some descendant of the Godolphin Arabian expressed its distress, they pounced on the results. This must be one of the great showstoppers in the public bars of Newmarket. What do you do for a living, then?

In the Chifney Restaurant, tea was in full swing. Beneath a huge oil of men in frock coats and topers leaning on canes at the original Tattersall at Hyde Park Corner (the firm was established in 1766), people in Barbour and quilted waistcoats chomped through sponge cake and Marlboros. You could tell the buyers from their advisers at a glance. The members of the horse world wore jeans and V-necked sweaters and those wonderfully ancient tweed jackets only the British can get away with. Those whom they were there to advise were fully kitted out in suits and top-pocket kerchiefs. Their womenfolk were seriously manicured. My mobile phone rang. The 30 people within earshot flung themselves on their handbags.

jumped. He jumped higher, and retreated to the safety of his group. Bloodstock is business like anything else these days. You don't have to actually like horses to buy one.

By the upper sale paddock, knots of potential buyers and faux-buyers watched the yearlings being walked out. There was something a bit pathetic about the thought of all these babies, who have lived their lives so far at home with the people who bred them, plodding trustingly into pantechnicons to be bartered. I had a bonding session with Lot 28, a chestnut filly by the American stallion Lion Cavern out of a mare who, seriously folks, was called Bint Secreto. She had the kind, clever eye of a good eventer, and kept glancing at me as she went past. She sold later for 46,000 guineas.

Beside me, four men in blazers discussed deals in West Country accents. "She looks like she might be the right sort," said one. "Yes," said another, "but you have to ask why he's selling her now. You have to question his faith in her as a two-year-old."

Inside the sale ring, the auctioneer was warning to his task, dosie-dohing his way through six-figure sums like the leader of a Line-dancing session. He scarcely paused to draw breath as he forced the deadpan bidders to ever more extravagant heights, and his colour rose with the prices as oxygen starvation set in. The auctioneers swapped over every few lots; presumably they then collapsed off-stage, gasping like well-hooked pike. The main performer was surrounded by men in sober suits and Tattersalls ties who signalled to the bidders. I failed to identify a single one of those, so minuscule were their movements. A board behind the auctioneers' heads gave the price in pounds, French francs, marks, US dollars and yen.

The arena was filled with a constant buzz of low-level chat as the horse world went about its business. And over the top of it all, the echo of auction patter: "A right good goer she is at 30,000," cried the auctioneer. "Forty thousand. It's not his value, but he's on the market. I sell him." "At 60,000," he fixed a reluctant bidder with a practised eye, "DON'T STOP NOW!" The crowd seemed sanguine about these sums: a hush only fell when the price rose above the 200,000 level.

In less than half an hour, I watched £1,243,200 change hands. After that I had to go out and get some fresh air and a reality check. By the paddock door, a blazer shook hands with a suit. "You after anything in particular?" asked the suit. "Well," replied the blazer, "there doesn't seem to be that much to buy. But I dare say we'll do some damage before the week's over."

سباقات الخيل

The double-life of Josef Skvorecky

He has been living in exile since 1969, but the Czech novelist has never left the land of his youth in his writing. On the eve of the publication of his latest work, he tells Jasper Rees about the experiences that shaped the first great Afro-Czech-American novel

First, the surname. It's only human to dodge books by authors with names you can't pronounce. A Slavonic thicket of consonants on the spine of a book, you naturally presume, advertises a novel of comparable impact. So, to clear the phonetic fog, Skvorecky reads as "Skvorenkee". After he left Prague at the gloomy dawn of 1969, the funeral of the suicidal protester Jan Palach just a day-old memory, its owner considered anglicising the name to Squoretsky. The friendlier spelling might have shifted a few more units, but would have been a terrible betrayal. He has come across a Dr Svorecky who also lives in Toronto, and there's a village outside Prague called Skvorec. But the forbidding surname will die with Josef Skvorecky.

The novels, needless to say, are not remotely impacted. Mostly inspired by his own tragicomic tussles with ridiculous Nazis and humpen Communists, they prowl through a past darkened by doctrine but brightened by blissful flirtations and care-free jazz. For the best account of how decent folk tried to carry on drinking, romancing, thinking, joking in poor old occupied mittel-Europe, Skvorecky's are the novels to come to. But they also look into the bitter-sweet business of exile, not just the type of exile Czech novelists are always mournfully banging on about, but the exile that cuts us all off from our own youth. It's all there in the *Engineer of Human Souls*, the masterpiece that uses a Conradian cut-and-paste narrative technique to nip between Skvorecky's adolescence in his war-torn home town, the Soviet invasion of 1968, and blandly comfortable Canada. He says he's not one for browsing back through his own books, but when I ask him which of his novels he'd take to a desert island, the old sentimentalist nominates *The Swell Season* "because that's part of my youth. I feel at home in my memories."

The latest entertainment is *The Bride of Texas*, a many splendoured tale from the American Civil War. It gets in close enough to history to smell the breath of bewhiskered generals and gentlemen slave-drivers, but it largely follows two sets of immigrants: the Czech volunteers who shouldered arms with General Sherman, and those other involuntary Americans whose emancipation was underwritten by Union victory. Call it the Great Afro-Czech-American novel.

That word "latest" needs qualification. Skvorecky began a massive programme of research into the Civil War 14 years ago, and finished the 600-page novel the year before the Velvet Revolution. It was brought out by the exile press the author and his wife ran in Toronto (68 Publishers), but not published in Czechoslovakia until 1992. Novelists who write in a "little" language from the old Eastern Bloc are used to stalled schedules imposed by translation and *santidat*, but Skvorecky's peculiar biography tells of uniquely interminable delay. *The Cowards*, his hip, Hemingwayesque debut set in his Bohemian home town during the Reich's retreat, lurked in a drawer for years. Published in 1958, it was the first Czech novel to forsake the language's stiff formality for slang. The reviewers mached it and Skvorecky lost his job as an editor. Some crime stories starring his "mournful" Lieutenant Borivka appeared under a pseudonym, but Czechs had to wait for the Prague Spring, and then another 21 years for the Velvet Revolution, to read the more directly autobiographical fiction starring his alter-ego Danny Smiricky.

For several of the books, the journey into English has been just as circuitous. *The Tank Corps*, about his National Service, took nearly 40 years to enter our language; *The Miracle Game*, about a priest accused by the Communists of faking a miracle, nearly 20. *Had It for the Blues*, "a sort of summing up of my life, because I had a premonition I wouldn't live very long", was written when he turned 50. He's now 72, and it has just appeared in the States. He has taken the precaution of writing his new novel in both Czech and English. (But don't hold your breath: he hasn't even told his British publishers, Faber, about it yet.)

In *The Bride of Texas*, the focus of interest is still love, loss, exile, liberty and the comical travails of the Czech abroad, but transplanted away from Skvorecky's own experiences to those of his compatriots who preceded him across the Atlantic by more than a century. He had already written a book about Dvorak's sojourn in America. Why did he move on to the civil war?

"When I was doing research for *Dvorak in Love*, I came across some brief memoirs printed in the 19th-century Czech calendars, as they are called, so I became interested, and then I went

deeper into it and found out that there were quite a few Czechs in very interesting positions, who marched with Sherman and so on."

During the long research, there emerged a secondary project, to buff up the reputation of Czech soldiery. Though a source of tremendous literary enrichment, Hasek's *The Good Soldier Svejk* has perpetuated the national caricature, reinforced by the collective shrug the nation seemed to make after the crushing of the Prague Spring, of the Czech as a joker with his head in the sand. The high farce of *The Tank Corps* scarcely makes amends. *The Bride of Texas* tells of one yellow braggart whose Falstaffian claims of valour no one believes. He's even called Shake, an American rewording of Svejk. "The Czechs were great warriors in the Middle Ages," says Skvorecky, "but in modern times they never fought for their own cause. Czech soldiers were drafted into the Austrian army and their heart was not in it. But in every major war there was a contingent of Czechs who fought with the enemy of Austria or Germany—the Czech airmen, for instance, who took part in the Battle of Britain and distinguished themselves very much indeed. And there was such a contingent in the Civil War in the Union army."

Another reason why Skvorecky turned backwards towards Czech-American history was the worry that he had exhausted the well of material supplied by his own life. For fans, though, the dream ticket would surely be Skvorecky on his liberated homeland, only he claims he has no plan "to write anything about the contemporary Czech Republic, because I do not live there and so it would be a sort of tourist view of the country."

None the less, the new bilingual novel to be published in Prague next month seems to contradict this claim. In *The Two Murders of My Double Life*, "one of the murders, that happens in Canada, is the kind of murder that Agatha Christie wrote about—it may be very interesting, and well constructed but not real life. The other is a real bloody murder that happens in Prague. It's more metaphorical, the murder of the soul, really." He adds, alarmingly, that it arose out of an incident in which the name of his wife Zdena Salivarova mysteriously made it on to an ancient but recently published list of agents of the StB, the secret police. "She charged the Ministry of Interior for spreading false rumours about herself and she won the trial in Prague. So she was cleansed of that suspicion but it did terrible things to her. It impaired her health and everything and I don't think she will ever fully recover from that wound."

Skvorecky has had his own health scares too. When I met him four years ago, his doctor had put him on a diet, and he drank two pints of Guinness during the interview. White-haired and plump, he certainly looks and sounds his age, but a hip replacement last year, a winter spent in Florida, and an operation that "really smashed" a gallstone this year seem to run parallel with a surge in energy. *The Swell Season*, and some detective stories, were popularly adapted for Czech television. His film adaptation of a Poe crime story is released at Christmas. Another script, based on his own *The Terror Saxophonist's Stories*, will be filmed in 1998. Writing, he says, is "like a sickness. I won't get rid of it."

In tips back to his native Machod, he has re-met all the young things, now in their seventies, whose resistance to Danny Smiricky's charms is documented in so many novels. Surely the sentimental rake is allowed one last outing, if only to complete the circle? "I have been thinking about it for some time," he concedes, "because there will be a reunion of almost all the classes of the high school that I graduated from in Machod. We were 21 people in the class and I think only two have died so far. So maybe I will attempt to do it. That's a nice idea. You reminded me."

These nostalgic forays to his birthplace stir all the more memories now that his old flames, known in the novels as sassy Maria and icy Irena, have blossoming granddaughters. The same age now as when Skvorecky wooed their grannies, they look like the ghosts of his past come back to life. And they're just as much of a tease. He met Irena's granddaughter at the premiere of *The Swell Season*, and Irena told me: "Do you know what she said? 'Grandma, why didn't you have anything with him? He's such a nice-looking man.'" So I would have had more luck with the granddaughter. But it's too late for that.

The Bride of Texas is published on Monday by Faber £16.99, translated by Zdena Polackova Henley



Josef Skvorecky, growing old gracefully: 'I feel at home in my memories'

Photograph: Ulf Anderson/Gamma

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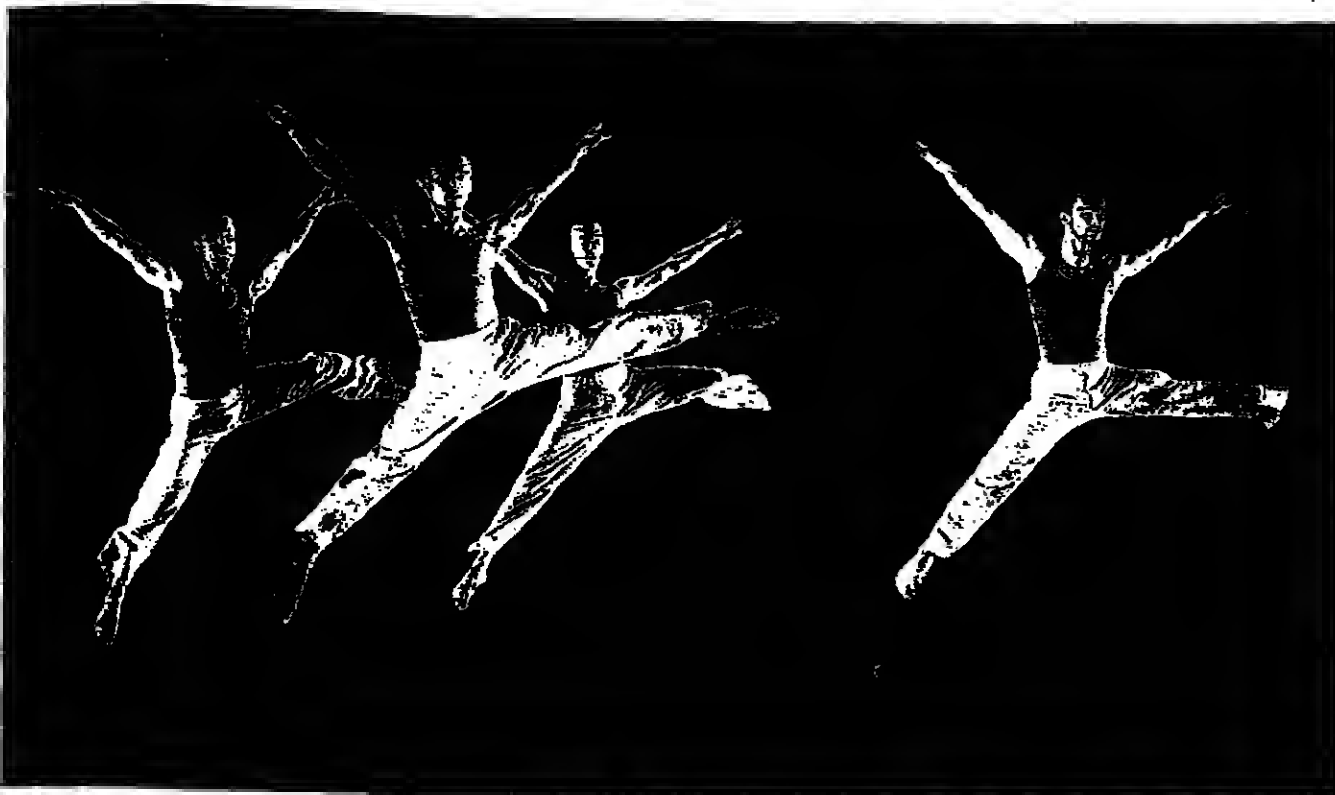
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reviews

DANCE Richard Alston Dance Company, QEH, London

As an exercise in bathos, Richard Alston Dance Company's mixed bill has few peers. But for vibrancy, progression and theatricality, you'd do better to watch the musicians than the dancers themselves. By Louise Levene



Arid and academic: Richard Alston Dance Company performs 'Okho' to the African rhythms of Xenakis. Photograph: Laurie Lewis

The trick with mixed programmes is to get the pieces in the right order so that the excitement (if any) builds towards a climax, sending the audience out into the night feeling that its intellect and its emotions have been worked over by a professional. Thursday evening's performance by Richard Alston Dance Company seems to have cast its three elements in reverse order, beginning with a world premiere performed to live percussion and ending with an earlier work danced to a tape. The whole set-up seemed to have been arranged so that the musicians could go home early. But what musicians they were.

Okho, the opening piece, was accompanied by three on-stage percussionists. During the first half, the meo tap out the complex monotony of Iannis Xenakis's African rhythms, the thumps finally diminishing to a whisper with just the fingernails tickling the skins. The dance, though seamlessly crafted and performed with a silky muscularity, seemed a rather arid and academic response to primal rhythms. However, things turned up considerably when Richard Benjafield installed himself behind a massive arrangement of djembes, snares

and steel drums. Four sticks in hand, his assault on his kit is a partly improvised sequence of startlingly aggressive thumps and taps. The movements of this bearded figure in black, his blond hair flying about, the light glinting madly off his spectacles, had more life and interest than those arranged by Alston.

Benjafield's energetic performance earned him whoops of approval from the audience but, to be frank, a policeman conducting traffic would have got wolf whistles from this lot. Their propensity to fit in the giggles was no help in the next piece, *Orpheus Singing and Dreaming*, performed to Birnwiele's 1970 *Nenia: the Death of Orpheus*. They found a lot of the crouching, agonising movements (think constipated cellist and you're about there) riotously funny, which was a little off-putting.

The story of Orpheus (Virgil's version via the libretto of Peter Zinovieff) is half spoken, half sung by the soprano Nicole Tibbels, who spits out the words one at a time. Birnwiele's intriguing composition is so powerful that, despite the invariably absorbing presence of Darshao Singh Bhuller's Orpheus, you would be happy enough experiencing this particular piece on the radio. Having taken

the decision to drag the musicians from the pit and park them behind the dancers you really have to go some to upstage Roger Heaton and friends.

The work concludes with a long blue sheet is pulled downstage enshrouding Singh Bhuller until only his head is visible. This seems a lot of trouble to go to as at no point does the movement succeed in suggesting that Orpheus's disembodied head is floating off downriver calling for his lost Eurydice.

The evening ended ("concludes" would suggest that the three pieces constituted some sort of progression) with *Beyond Measure*. Nine dancers enacted a kind of Congregationalist meeting using a pair of Martha Graham's old benches and a tape of Bach's Chorales and Chorale Preludes. The movement here, as throughout the evening, was clean and sharp: the whole show has a polite, sedate, almost wilfully untheatrical air. I think that this flatness could have been disguised by the simple measure of putting the drummers on last and letting the audience leave the building with pulses racing to African rhythms. Alston, in running his works in reverse order, seemed determined to protect us from such an irrational response. Don't excite yourself.

CLASSICAL MUSIC James MacMillan: Cello Concerto premiere, Barbican

MacMillan's new work develops his 'dialogue of extremes' — between dissonance and harmony, innovation and tradition. Robert Cowan applauds his skill

There was a definite thematic continuity about Thursday's LSO Concert at the Barbican where, between the grainy narrative of Sibelius's *En Saga* and the dancing triplets of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, Sir Colin Davis conducted the world premiere of a work that brought us both narrative and dance. James MacMillan's Cello Concerto is a big piece (40 minutes, arranged 15-10-15), bigger than *The World's Reasoning* — the first phase in a planned triptych reflecting the passage of Holy Week — though presumably not as expansive as a "large symphonic score" that's in the pipeline for next autumn. The programming context was identical to that which, a few weeks earlier, had brought us Colin Matthews' Cello Concerto, though here it seemed especially appropriate.

MacMillan's Concerto extends the "dialogue of extremes" that has proved a pivotal aspect of his earlier work. It opens with a bang, and keeps the soloist busily employed virtually for the duration. It is, in a word, a "real" Cello Concerto — lyrical, combative, rich in dialogue and scored with a skill that suggests innovative imagination and a marked respect for tradition. Mstislav Rostropovich was both its prompting agent (together with the LSO, that is) and its first interpreter, and if his highly demonstrative stage manner was anything to go by — nodding approvingly at key tutti and quivering passionately at every solo entry — he believes in its many positive virtues.

The first movement, "The Mockery", cues yapping muted brass, a "stately" waltz, proud plainchant-style chorales and a closing cadenza that fades — very gradually — from heartfelt protest to an almost imperceptible whisper. In a pre-concert talk, MacMillan explained how Rostropovich had sent him home at the last minute to revise the cadenza — a wise move, given the music's effectiveness. The finale fades in similar fashion, rising in pitch this time and punctuated by the fierce, percussive hammering that has been a significant "leitmotif" throughout the work.

The second movement ushers in bright, celestial chiming and filigree woodwinds, although when the finale breaks through with images of rain, wind and thunder (MacMillan's use of percussion is second-to-none among his peers) the drama greatly intensifies. The Cello Concerto's design rests heavily on an imaginative juxtaposition of dissonance and harmony, grotesque dance tunes and the ritual blare of tonally bolstered

plainchant. "Scottish Schnittke" murmured a colleague, though I'd prefer to think in terms of a shared Northern candour. The Concerto's closing moments recall the stark, echoing retreat of Stravinsky's *Les Noces*.

MacMillan's Cello Concerto played to an appreciative full house. The performance seemed first-rate; there were hugs all round and Sir Colin Davis returned for a big-boned account of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. He'd already treated us to a generously dramatic *En Saga*, and that generosity extended to the symphony where, in addition to taking his time and bending the musical line, Davis gave us the first movement and scherzo repeats — though not the finale's. He was truly in his element shovelling vigorously at the staccato crotchets that lead into the first repeat, signalling heavy vibrato with his left hand, bouncing, swaying and generally having a whale of a time. It was as if he had finished his day's work and was finally being let out to play.



James MacMillan, the Scottish Schnittke?

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TELEVISION Sliders (BBC2)

There's nothing like a spot of time travel. Especially when it's a vehicle for America to bare its tortured soul. Jasper Rees rides a wormhole to another dimension

When they'd finished making *Sliders*, the cupboard where the clichés are kept was bare. Two droll beautiful young things dabble in time travel. He's called Quinn, she's Wade, or maybe it's the other way round. Naturally, this being primetime travel, a professor tags along in a bow tie. The professor, it goes without saying, has a name that sounds like he already comes from the dystopian sci-fi-escape he is about to journey to. In this case it's Futuro, Maximilian Futuro.

As the gang are about to slide through the wormhole into a different dimension (sorry, but there's no dignified way of rewording that phrase), an overdressed R&B singer gets sucked into the experiment. He's called

Brown, Rembrandt Brown, as opposed to James, Errol, Jackson or Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown. As played by Cleavant Derricks, this constitutes a possibly unique instance of a role named after a Dutch painter taken by an actor whose own Christian name is even more ridiculous.

When they all come through to the other side, the team say things like "this place gives me the creeps", a line you get at least once in every episode of *Scooby Doo*.

Plainly, this is a cartoon in which the characters happen not to be animated. (In any sense.) Somehow, though, *Sliders* is weirdly likeable. Giving full vent to all-American paranoia, each plot imagines an alternative present where enemies who in

real life have been vanquished now reign triumphant. One forthcoming episode will find President Oliver North in the White House. In another, the team visit a disgracefully pacifist world where they have to invent the atomic bomb in order to save the human race.

To the opening story, a real peach, America is under the communist yoke. The greenback is now red, and McCarthyesque senators rail against free-marketising subversives. The only thing that hasn't changed is the Russian cabbie who can't speak English. The theatrical regalia of the Evil Empire have been faithfully reproduced, but there are some nicely nightmarish inventions, too. When he's arrested,

Rembrandt is taken to a vast interview warehouse. It's dotted with suspects sitting on isolated chairs around which interrogators prowls.

With almost saintly modesty, the script does allow that something is moderately rotten in the state of America. When he's arrested, Rembrandt's show trial is on a trial show, plainly inspired by the purulent American model available on Court TV. And when the gang escape from Leninist San Francisco, they re-enter the present right next door to dossier kipping down under a statue of Lincoln. In salute their conscience, and the programme's, they dump some greenbacks in his heaving chest. But hey, at least they're green.

STEPHEN VAUGHAN

TRISTRAM KENTON



THE F	THE O	THE P
JUDE	IPHIGENIA IN AULIS	SHOPPING AND FUCKING
<p>Michael Winterbottom directs this adaptation of Hardy's novel, a story that even Hardy himself admitted was "a little bit of a mess".</p> <p>Adrian Maris-Jones declared it "a little triumph". The acting is excellent all the way to the edges of the film. "Powerful, wonderfully photographed. If Jude simplifies the story it never obscures it. ... Hardy would surely approve," enthused the FT. "Minimises the downside of Hardy's bleakness," smiled Variety. "A beautifully modulated performance. Winter gives Jude a real start in the art, not quite enough though," declared the Times. "A tale of protracted gloominess. ... High marks for literary fidelity. But as screen entertainment it's a different story," agreed the Standard. "An ambitious, sensitive, but ultimately uninvolved effort," judged Time Out.</p>	<p>James MacMillan's new work develops his 'dialogue of extremes' — between dissonance and harmony, innovation and tradition. Robert Cowan applauds his skill</p> <p>MacMillan's Cello Concerto is a big piece (40 minutes, arranged 15-10-15), bigger than <i>The World's Reasoning</i> — the first phase in a planned triptych reflecting the passage of Holy Week — though presumably not as expansive as a "large symphonic score" that's in the pipeline for next autumn. The programming context was identical to that which, a few weeks earlier, had brought us Colin Matthews' Cello Concerto, though here it seemed especially appropriate.</p> <p>MacMillan's Concerto extends the "dialogue of extremes" that has proved a pivotal aspect of his earlier work. It opens with a bang, and keeps the soloist busily employed virtually for the duration. It is, in a word, a "real" Cello Concerto — lyrical, combative, rich in dialogue and scored with a skill that suggests innovative imagination and a marked respect for tradition. Mstislav Rostropovich was both its prompting agent (together with the LSO, that is) and its first interpreter, and if his highly demonstrative stage manner was anything to go by — nodding approvingly at key tutti and quivering passionately at every solo entry — he believes in its many positive virtues.</p> <p>The first movement, "The Mockery", cues yapping muted brass, a "stately" waltz, proud plainchant-style chorales and a closing cadenza that fades — very gradually — from heartfelt protest to an almost imperceptible whisper. In a pre-concert talk, MacMillan explained how Rostropovich had sent him home at the last minute to revise the cadenza — a wise move, given the music's effectiveness. The finale fades in similar fashion, rising in pitch this time and punctuated by the fierce, percussive hammering that has been a significant "leitmotif" throughout the work.</p> <p>The second movement ushers in bright, celestial chiming and filigree woodwinds, although when the finale breaks through with images of rain, wind and thunder (MacMillan's use of percussion is second-to-none among his peers) the drama greatly intensifies. The Cello Concerto's design rests heavily on an imaginative juxtaposition of dissonance and harmony, grotesque dance tunes and the ritual blare of tonally bolstered</p>	<p>Kate Ashtfield, Andrew Clover, James Kennedy, Antony Ryding and Robin Scans star in Mark Ravenhill's first full-length play, a tough, brutally funny look at (de)exploitation, commercialism and violence for Max Stafford-Clark's company Out of Joint.</p> <p>Paul Taylor relished Ravenhill's "eye for the blackly comic bizzareness of this tragic, emotionally shrink-wrapped world" and "the chance to see a real talent at work". "The latest contribution to a growing genre, the drama of disenchantment. ... <i>Shopping and Fucking</i> with more sex and fewer laughs," grumbled the Times. "The play's impact is as short-lived as the pre-packed, throwaway meals on which the characters survive," sniffed the FT. "So desolate and at times so moving ... scenes of savage humour and disgusting degradation throb in the memory," admired the Telegraph. "An uncontrolled talent," decided the Guardian.</p>
Cert 15, on selected release across the country.	Tonight, Wed and Fri at Leeds Grand (0113-245 9951) and then touring.	At the Theatre Upstairs at the Ambassadors, London WC2 (0171-565 5000) until 19 Oct and then on tour.
Winterbottom has made brave choices and come up trumps with Hardy's powerfully sombre novel.	An evening of mixed fortunes, but a rarity that should be seen.	Strong stuff, although more in terms of intent than act or vocabulary. Excellent acting in a notably clear production.

KEY



EXCELLENT



GOOD



OK



POOR



DEADLY

سكزا من الأصل

On the trail of the lonesome prairie

Jan Morris likes the allegory but can't stand the conversation in a study of Montana's dry lands

Bad Land by Jonathan Raban, Picador, £15.99

When the sublimely gifted Jonathan Raban set off from his home in Seattle to write a book about eastern Montana, his wife apparently thought it a less than thrilling notion – she watched his preparations, he says, “with poorly feigned enthusiasm”. Mr Raban has already given us two famously skilful and affectionate books about the United States and he, perhaps intended *Bad Land* (sub-titled “An American Romance”) to be the third in a sequence. I rather agree with Mrs Raban, though. It is not that the Raban touch has lost its magic only that for my own tastes the apparent subject, pursued for more than 300 pages, becomes a bit of a bore. Or perhaps I am out of my depth?

For the apparent subject is by no means the whole of it. This is certainly not a travel book – Jonathan Raban never writes mere travel books. Ostensibly it is an examination of the process, soon after the turn of the 20th century, in which hundreds of thousands of migrants were lured to the east Montana drylands by the promise of quick agricultural riches. They were misled. Most of them did their best, failed and moved on, leaving the prairies desolate and largely empty behind them.

Nobody could conjure better the resulting tristesse. When Raban takes us into some long-abandoned homestead of the prairies, with its collapsed verandah, its fridge without a door, the swallow-nests in its parlour walls, the foxed dog-eared copy of Campbell's *Soil Culture Manual*, when he turns his four-wheel-drive up the dirt road to one of these sad memorials of failure, we can hear for ourselves the wind off the flatlands, smell the dust, feel the springs on our thighs through the derelict sofa. His powers of evocation are unbeatable still.

But the hook is much more. It is an allegory. It is concerned not simply with the dry lands of Montana and the troubles of its settlers, but with the whole historical drama of American immigration. The original belief in progress and destiny – the American Dream – has so often been followed by disappointment and ugly reaction, and the “bad land” of the title, I take it, is not just eastern Montana, but America itself. These are great issues, sensitively explored, and illustrated by meticulous reconstructions of Raban's particular examples of migrants, what kind of people they were, what they read and talked about, how their attitudes were affected by the frequent failure (and occasional successes) of their enterprises.

I confess I did not at first realise the existence of this larger sub-plot. The trouble was that I found myself so unenticed by the foreground of the tale, the top layer of the allegory. Raban evidently loves the empty monotony of the eastern Montana landscape, just as he appreciates the down-to-earth practicality of its inhabitants. Neither captivates me. There is no pretending that by and large prairie people are scintillating talkers, and when their subject is their family's attempts to make an agricultural go of things, they tend to make my mind blur. Nobody begrudges them their memories. It must have been awful – fencing miles and miles of empty land, scooping coal out of the soil, desperately ploughing and digging and hoeing, with terrible weather and Biblical plagues of grasshoppers. But after a time I began to muddle up the Neds, Milks, Percys, Loreens and Wynonas of Raban's reports and dialogues, to forget which was which or even which generation they represented – for having traced all he could trace of the original homesteaders, he went on to track down their descendants.



Empty monotony and DIY pioneerism: the wintry landscape of Raban's 'bad land', eastern Montana.

Photograph: Michael Nichols/Magnum

He is adept at a sort of DIY pioneerism, talking knowledgeably about things like tally pins, sprockets and gumbo clay, and conscientiously chatting not only with intelligent retired schoolmistresses, but with good ol' boys in Stetson hats on bar stools. Now and then, all the same, he cannot help reminding us that he is a man born to a very different culture, beautifully educated, gracefully ready with an artistic analogy or a literary allusion. When he has had his fill of the *Book of Revelation*, the vatic text of American fundamentalist Christianity, he telephones his father, a High Anglican English clergyman, to ask if he ever had reason to quote from that book during his professional life. What a relief, the dry ironic voice over the transatlantic telephone admitting that Mr Raban Senior “did have a weakness for the phrase ‘the lukewarm Laodiceans’”!

“The dusty prairie,” says the blurb to *Bad Land*, “holds the key to the puzzle of modern America.” This bit of hype, I assume, refers to Raban's contention that out of the disillusion-

ment of the homesteaders and their kind arose the extreme right-wing, anti-federalist movements that centre upon the American north-west, and the fanatic Christian fundamentalism of modern America. The Montana homesteaders were betrayed, and Campbell's *Soil Culture Manual*, which Mr Raban finds in that deserted house on a very early page of his book, was the instrument of their betrayal.

H.W. Campbell had evolved the theory that semi-arid land could be made fertile by capillary attraction – coaxing water out of the soil itself. Unscrupulously taken up by the railroad companies, who had vast tracts of land for development, and fostered by the Federal Government, this dubious proposition is what brought the settlers in their multitudes to Montana, and Campbell's *Soil Culture Manual* was among their required reading (later their own experiences were assembled under such titles as *Wheels Across Montana's Prairie* and *Reapers of the Dust: A Prairie Chronicle* – titles which make my own heart sink, but

apparently only invigorated brave Mr Raban).

Capillary attraction did not work – most of the settlers journeyed on, impoverished and embittered, to the west – and it was about then in Raban's narrative that I began to wonder if I had misunderstood the nature of his allegory, too. Perhaps it had developed, as he wrote it, into a metaphor of his own American experiences, as a settler himself? Could the bad land of its title also be his personal United States? In the sad last paragraph of the work he returns, his researches mercifully over, to the house he has acquired (built 1906) in Seattle – “a good house for an immigrant; its somewhat shabby footing on the hill matched mine”. He finds its door unexpectedly locked, and has to shoulder it open. His dog doesn't bark. There is a pile of mail for him, but no note. “Anybody home?” he calls in the final line of the book, but we are not told if there is an answer. Is it just the symmetrical end of *Bad Land*, which begins with an empty house, or does it metaphorically conclude an American romance?

Holy bread and soldiers' bones

Emerson, the great New England transcendentalist, didn't mince his words. By Frank McLynn

Emerson Among the Eccentrics: A Group Portrait by Carlos Baker, Viking, £25

Ralph Waldo Emerson occupies an uncertain place in literature. While the achievements of other 19th-century New Englanders and Yankees – Melville, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Whitman – speak for themselves, are we justified in seeing Emerson as any more than a talented essayist? But the school he is associated with – New England transcendentalism – was certainly influential in the northern USA before the Civil War.

It was a kind of offshoot of German philosophical romanticism, impatient with mere “understanding,” the mental faculty used in science or everyday life. Beyond that, thought Emerson and his followers, there was “reason” by which one intuitively spiritual, metaphysical and other transcendental truths. Reason allows us to go beyond religious dogma, ethical tradition or received opinion. With Thoreau this took the form of a justification of civil disobedience; with Emerson it became a kind of fuzzy pantheism.

We can see the sort of thing the transcendentalists were driving at when one considers the scandal (quaint to our ears) that drove Emerson out of the Unitarian church and his early calling as a preacher. Emerson decided that when Jesus told his disciples to eat the bread and drink the wine in memory of him at the Last Supper, he meant them to do it, but did not intend to impose a “memorial feast” on future generations. This was considered blasphemous and Emerson was pressured to take his transcendental insights elsewhere.

He did so, in an interesting career as essayist, poet, globe-trotter and centre of a “school” that included Margaret Fuller and Amos Brown Alcott, father of the better known Louisa May. Emerson's milieu was that of experimental, socialist communities like Brook Farm, would-be utopias such as the Oneida community and the religious sects of the Hutterites, Shakers and Mur-

mons, in whom Emerson took a great interest.

What is attractive about Emerson is his wit, and what is not so attractive is his somewhat supercilious personality. He remarked that liberty on the lips of Daniel Webster was like the word “love” in the mouth of a courtesan; he characterised a bad president (Franklin Pierce) as a “road in amber”; he described Brigham Young as a “sufficient ruler, and perhaps civiliser of his kingdom of blockheads.”

Yet he seemed able to maintain a lasting friendship only with second-raters. He patronised Whitman, an incomparably superior poet. He and Thoreau gradually drifted apart, probably because of Emerson's envy of his friend's superior talents; and Emerson quarrelled with Hawthorne because he (Hawthorne) had written an admiring political biography of the pro-slavery president Franklin Pierce.

Emerson was in fact a good hater, and the fol-

lowing outburst against the South in 1865 shows a certain kind of Yankee sensibility at white heat: “I charge the Southerner with starving prisoners of war; with massacring surrendered men with advertising a price for the life of Lincoln...with assassination of the president...with attempts to import the yellow fever into New York; with the cutting up of the bones of our soldiers to make ornaments, and drinking-cups of their skulls.”

Carlos Baker's book contains a lot of fascinating information about that curious collection of idealists centred round Concord and Boston in the mid-19th-century. My favourite was Amos Bronson Alcott who did not just try to found a socialist commune, but a vegetarian socialist commune.

The volume bowls along quite amiably, but is in many ways an old-fashioned book, reminiscent of the Gay Wilson Allen style of biography. It is written in a curiously esoteric way as if address-

ing a Princeton graduate seminar. Baker never identifies Brook Farm as an experimental Fourierist commune and there is an assumption that all his readers must know what it is. There is too much quotation from Emerson's letters and journals, to the point where the author seems at times unable to write a sentence without the crutch of Emerson's own utterances.

More seriously, there is no attempt to penetrate Emerson's inner psychological world, and in general too many of Baker's insights are confined to the surface. There is much talk of eccentricity, but surely the most *outré* artefact is a biography that begins when the subject is 27, as this book does. If the child is father to the man using Baker's methodology we would have to conclude that Emerson was a product of parthenogenesis. There is a case for saying that in this collection of eccentrics the oddest of all is the author himself.

Counting the virtues of a wide acquaintance

James Joyce gurgled his tea. Peter Scott was spoilt rotten by his mother. James Fergusson admires an acute diarist's eye

Fourteen Friends by James Lees-Milne, John Murray, £19.99

James Lees-Milne writes of William Plomer: “He was by no means handsome, and resembled the sort of decent, shy man you might hope, after the death of someone near to you, to encounter at the undertaker's.”

Lees-Milne was, evidently, horn an observer. His public career was with the National Trust in its glory days, when amateurism was still a solid virtue: he was responsible, before and after the Second World War, later as the Trust's Historic Houses Adviser, for identifying properties for acquisition and – most subtly – for negotiating with long-handed squires, their heirs and assignees, the painful transfer of ownership. His eye for buildings is demonstrated in the handsome books he wrote for Batsford on the

Baroque in Spain and Italy, on Robert Adam and Inigo Jones, in which he describes architecture as others might paint it.

His clear eye for people, from end-of-dynasty relics to the bright young friends of his Twenties and Thirties, was first revealed much later, in his acute 1970 autobiography *Another Self*, in which he delivers an extraordinary portrait of his art-hating father, and then in his wartime diaries, beginning with *Ancestral Voices* (1975), which have achieved the status of minor classics.

Lees-Milne is not to everybody's taste. He appears too patrician for some, too provocatively incorrect. But his strength as an observer is that he has always felt an outsider; he has always had access to that patrician world (Eton, Magdalen, the Irish Guards, Brooks's), but not felt himself of it. Before he went to Oxford his father sent him on a course at a Stenography School for Young Ladies in Chelsea and, after he went down, his first job for four years was as a secretary. The first subject of his new book, the sculptress Kathleen Kennet (Mrs Captain Scott), he met during this time, and in 1937 – whilst she was still alive, and to her intense interest – he was asked by the *Times* to write her obituary.

The texts for two other of his subjects, Sacheverell Sitwell and Rosamond Lehmann, began as obituaries in the *Independent*. Lees-Milne has conspicuous strengths as an obituarist – apart from longevity (which could hardly have been apparent in 1937). He has had an astonishingly wide acquaintance, he has a long memory and a deep diary, an old-fashioned breadth of reading and a fine sense of small drama. He can be acerbic (he is occasionally merciless in his diaries), but he writes with love. “Sometimes in the watches of the night,” he begins his account of the decorator John Fowler, “I try to induce sleep by counting the virtues of my friends.”

Here is a moving portrait of Vita Sackville-West, who retreated into the sherry bottle in old age but won Lees-Milne's “total affection” and for whose poetry, especially *The Land*, he is an assertive champion; here is Robert Byron, barking with laughter, to whom Lees-Milne's last furious words were “I shall never see you again. Robert. Never! This is the end” – Byron went missing, believed torpedoed, shortly afterwards; here is the versatile but ugly Oshert Lancaster, more wit than humour, and the well-intentioned artist

peer Paul Methuen, whose epitaph reads *Optimum fecit* – “He did his best”.

In counting virtues, Lees-Milne is inevitably interested in heredity. Just as his father deplored everything the young Jim stood for, so, he notes, his friends had terrible parental struggles. Henry Green (who refused to return to his family home after his brother inherited) denounces his father on a bus; Vita Sackville-West (who wrote a guidebook to Knole after not having set foot in the place for 20 years) had a mother who embroiled herself in embarrassing court cases – as did Sacheverell Sitwell's, James Pope-Hennessy loathed his major-general father. William Plomer's father bellowed at him for washing grapes; Kathleen Kennet, on the other hand, spoilt her son, Peter Scott, rotten.

In observation, it is the small detail (that diarist's bonus) which tells. Lees-Milne records meeting the slender-fingered James Joyce in Paris, and his gurgling over tea. “Most poignantly of all in these rich, sharp, elegant memoirs, he remembers, with Patrick Kinross in Scotland, having to drag a broken-legged stag, a royal, into the sea to drown. It was, he says, “one of the nastiest experiences of my life”.

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The Booker Shortlist 1996

The author of *Waterland*, of some 40 other short stories and novels, is a writer whose return with a sobriety, almost staid, study of death and chance. The tales of Jack Dodd's family, butcher, are driven by his ambition to own and three friends drive, Ben and Roy to Margate where, as per the dead man's instructions, the ashes are to be scattered on the Pier. En route, master of conversation, roasts, arguments, parallel narratives, and flashbacks reveal how the characters' lives are intertwined. "It is all very busy and incomplete in a lifetime, rather intriguing way," wrote Hugo Burnald. "It is elaborate and absorbing but without a real narrative type or unified structure. But Swift succeeds in his main aim, creating just the right kind of unmissed respect for his characters, and for human variety and mortality."

It is a great pity, since the intention was a fine one and the book is mostly straightforward and clean-cut. But it does lead one to doubt the whole idea that literature is significantly about "place" at all. Raymond Carver once wrote: "Literature is about people - does that need saying?" Maybe it does.

D'Angerous liaisons

Margaret Drabble being snide about reviewers?
Tut-tut, says Hugo Barnacle

The Witch of Exmoor by Margaret Drabble, Viking, £16

At the outset of her new novel, Margaret Drabble writes: "Begin on a midsummer evening... Let us say that we are in England, in Hampshire." As Aristotle showed, either we are or we aren't. Let us not muck about.

The first scene is a dinner party, and although the setting is meant to be contemporary, there is a curious time-warped effect. The well-heeled company are playing the "Just Society" game, where they have to pick the kind of world they would like to be born into if they didn't know their social position in advance. These bourgeois post-prandial guilt-trips were such a staple of literary fashion in the age of flares, Austin Allegros and brown corduroy modular sofa units that it really does feel quite strange in a brand new book.

Perhaps in reality Drabble is not so much out of date as out of ideas. A successful middle-aged man and his successful middle-aged sisters are worried that their brilliant but batty old mother, the "witch" of the title, is going to squander their inheritance. Nina Bowden's *Family Money* has dealt with similar themes in rather better style. There are also overtones of Barbara Vine, and some skeletons in the family closet which bear a strong resemblance to those Drabble has rattled at us before, in *The Radiant Way*.

The writing shows ambition, but not the inspiration to match. The word "palimpsest", a common symptom of this complaint, appears as early as page 18, when Nathan, an adman married to one of the sisters, takes a walk to look at the countryside. In his mind, "The rural England of advertising is superimposed on the palimpsest of the England of Hampshire in the 1990s." It is doubtful that you can logically superimpose something on a palimpsest any more than you can dilute water, but the aim is to work the ghostly word in somewhere, anywhere, for its ready-made posse associations.

Drabble produces a troublingly high number of these lines that announce their own cleverness but do not supply it. Describing the vast and hideous house where Frieda the "witch" lives in remote Devon, the narrator asks, "What folly had built this folly here...?" For noticing that madness and an extravagant building can both be referred to by the word "folly", *nul points*.

Frieda walks through her overgrown grounds, "this wracked and rent, this Rackham woodland". The allusion to the great illustrator helps us to visualise the scene and ties in with fairytale parallels elsewhere, but the chiming sound of "wracked" makes it all embarrassingly self-conscious and the suggestion of "rackrent" is a complete irrelevance. There are no landlord-tenant relations involved.

Nathan's mother, meanwhile, doesn't like him living in his trendy South Bank block because there's an E in the postcode, an ugly reminder of the East End their Jewish family worked hard to escape from. We are told she "hasn't moved with the times. She won't even eat food with an E in it." Surely a preoccupation with E-numbered food additives is as neurotically modern as you can get?

David D'Anger, a suave Guyanese academic married to another of the sisters, is repeatedly described, because of his dazzling powers of persuasion, as "dangerous". You see it coming the instant Drabble introduces him, but that doesn't make it any easier to bear.

Will Paine, a character intended to be catalytic but really just peripheral, is half-Jamaican and, we are told, "too nice-looking to be pure-bred English. The pure-bred English are a motley, mottled, mongrel ugly breed, blotched with all the wrong pigments, with hair that does not do much for them at all. The English are clumsy and gross and at the same time runty. They do not make the best of themselves. Their bodies are thick, their faces are either pinched and beaky like mean birds or shapeless as potatoes." Is Drabble speaking for herself here? She doesn't seem to be speaking for David Niven, Cary Grant, Vivien Leigh or Julie Christie. And "pure-bred English" is a stupidly racist contradiction in terms.

Nearing the end, the narrator says, "We are nearing the end. Soon we can go for the kill. Indeed, for the overkill... There will be one or two deaths, but not many." So, not an overkill at all, then. Not exactly Operation Gomorrah or anything.

Readable enough in its second half, once the action belatedly starts, the novel nevertheless contains a quantity of snide remarks about book reviewers, invariably a sign that the author is conscious of failure and expects bad notices. May Drabble soon return to form.



A little gentler on the G-String, Mr Smith: Pasha and Bayadere from the camera of the early Victorian photographer, Roger Fenton. In the summer of 1858 Fenton staged and recorded over 50 images of the odalisques, musicians, and hookah-smokers in his London studio. Delacroix assiduously took sketchbook and paints onto the streets to capture his Orient. By contrast the cheerful air of amateur dramatics that pervades Fenton's collection is not to be missed. 'Pasha and Bayadere' is published by the Getty Museum in the Studies in Art series.

Piling on the agony

Susie Boyt is simultaneously repulsed and impressed by the tale of a Harlem heroine

Push by Sapphire, Secker, £7.99

How Stella Got Her Groove Back by Terry MacMillan, Viking, £16

It's unusual for a book to make me cry, or, for that matter, to make me vomit. *Push*, a novel by an American writer called Sapphire, produced both reactions. It tells the tale of Precious Jones, a 16-year-old black girl who has never been out of Harlem, who has suffered the worst kind of childhood abuses you could imagine. Raped by her father from infancy, she gives birth to his child at 12, on the kitchen floor, following a severe beating from her mother who has also subjected her to sexual and physical assaults. The result is a mongoloid baby whom she refers to throughout the book as Little Mongo. At 16, Precious is pregnant by her father again and, as the baby starts to show inside her, is expelled from school, and sent to an alternative centre for children with difficulties, called Each One Teach One.

Here, in a small class of rape and incest survivors, ex-crack addicts, a girl who has had to watch her mother being murdered and a junior prostitute, Precious begins the long and difficult journey towards recovery. Trying to write helps her find a way of acknowledging what she has suffered. Learning to read her class-mates' work as well as books like *The Colour Purple* help her to manage her shame. The book's movement towards hope is slow and difficult, never facile, and does not underestimate the obstacles involved.

Reading this book made me distinctly uncomfortable, for many different reasons, and it is obviously meant to be. We are not spared any details when Sapphire describes Precious's father having brutal and depraved sex with his daughter. We are given a glimpse of her state of shame and confusion after these regular assaults when we are told that smearing her face with her own faeces after her father has raped her is somehow soothing to the heroine's troubled mind. I wondered, while reading, what exactly the point of committing all this horror to paper was. To let the world know that such things go on? To show how completely vulnerable children are to their parents' desire to damage them?

To make a point about hope – that some kind of sanity can be salvaged from even the most vile beginnings? The book certainly forces one to consider these questions, all of which seem valid and worthy and yet somehow the relentless scale of the tragedy and the explicit details of the sexual suffering are too much. Just when things look as though they couldn't get any worse, Precious discovers that her father has infected her with the HIV virus.

The author teaches creative writing and poetry in New York City and has said that Precious's life is the kind of story that is familiar to her through her work with teenagers. At times, *Push* made me wonder whether it was right to convert such terrible personal tragedy into a literary product. But perhaps that's the point: that no-one wants to have to face up to, or take responsibility for, things that have gone this wrong. The father's delight in his daughter and her mother's abuse are so vile that you are left with the feeling that you have been forced to watch what took place. Hence the vomit.

A tendency towards blandness in Terry MacMillan's *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* was a life-saver after

Sapphire's book. This is a tale of how a successful, 42-year-old black financial analyst called Stella Payne turns her world around. As the book begins, Stella's life is shown as near-complete. She has a great job, a beautiful apartment with quirky colour scheme and leather flooring. She has a son, Quincy, she adores, a toned and youthful body, and a hobby designing original pieces of furniture. In fact, she hardly has time to notice that the one thing she lacks is a meaningful relationship.

This all changes when a trip to Jamaica sends her reeling. Suddenly, all the things she has previously valued – security, financial success, control – seem to lose their allure as she finds herself falling for a 20-year-old Jamaican man. The book is written in a light, conversational style which lends itself particularly well to the heroine's frequent attempts to get herself back on the straight and narrow.

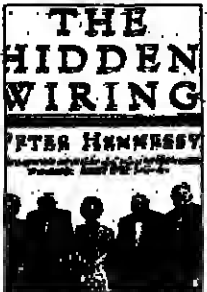
Although *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* could benefit from a more complex plot, it is a pleasant, undemanding tale of emotional awakening.

Paperbacks

Reviewed by Emma Hagestadt and Christopher Hirst

The Hidden Wiring by Peter Hennessy (Indigo, £7.99)

Britain in hugely fortunate in having the assiduous and witty Hennessy to probe our "back of an envelope constitution". Sometimes it seems barely to exist – witness Michael Heseltine's aggressive empire building, though his post is "unknown to the constitution". Yet Hennessy insists on the importance of this "curious compound... concealed beneath layers of opacity and mystery". His study ranges far and wide, but is most incisive on the monarchy. Its powers are substantial – if mostly in abeyance – and it is here to stay. A "defunct politician" as head of state just won't do.



Women of the Raj by Margaret MacMillan (Thames & Hudson, £9.95)

MacMillan's hugely enjoyable history of the messahib's commences with the traumatic acclimatisation of the newcomer. One guide recommended flannel underwear, net corset, petticoat, camisole and woollen tea-gown as the minimum acceptable wear. But there were compensations. A French visitor noted "the enormous quantity of beer and wine absorbed by young Englishwomen". Everyone remarked on the unexpected "playfulness" of the Raj. One regiment was known as the "Fornicating Fifth", while two messahibs were dubbed "Treacle Tart" and "Bed and Breakfast Betty".



Praying for Sheetrock by Melissa Fay Greene (Minerva, £7.99)

In McIntosh County in 1971 the civil rights movement was little more than a fabulous rumour. Too busy sweeping the sidewalks, cleaning motels and preparing catfish, the black population of this isolated Georgia backwater had little time for organised protest. But, as the book's author is at pains to point out, history happened here in 1971. Combining oral testimony with her own narrative recreation of events, this toothsome social history resurrects the key players in a local drama every bit as gripping as that played out in the streets of Montgomery and Little Rock.



Winter Journey by Isabel Colgate (Penguin, £6.99)

Colgate's latest saga about two ageing siblings hacking out their last days, lollaps along with the good intentions of a Labrador pup. Returning to her family pile in the Mendips, Edith Ashby is kept awake by memories of the past (bunt balls and failed marriages) and Mrs Weeks's shepherd's pie. But being a practical sort she's determined to whip herself, and hatcher brother Alfred, into shape before old age really hits. A novel in which nothing happens – apart from long chilly walks and chats with the neighbours about the collapse of Lloyds – and too much is explained. English life at its most claustrophobic.



H G The History of Mr Wells by Michael Foot (Black Swan, £7.99)

It is hard to imagine many of today's 21-year-olds having to ration their reading of *Tom-Bungay* while on a first visit to Paris. Foot's youthful enthusiasm has continued unabated, despite the decline in HG's stock. From its ringing opening, "He was born in Kent, where Socialism was born", this is mainly a political life. In particular, HG's defence of a woman's right to choose is valid as ever. Of his subject's sexual athleticism, Foot defensively notes, "his love affairs were long-lasting" though in a fictional self-portrait, Wells imitates his own behaviour as disgraceful.



The Way We Live Now by Richard Hogart (Pimlico, £7.99)

An epigraph from Alberto Moravia sums up this stimulating, if dour study: "The ratio of literacy to illiteracy is constant but nowadays the illiterates can read and write." Though disappointed with a culture dominated by soundbites ("the semantic equivalent of chicken nuggets"), Hogart is not bereft of hope. Curiously for a writer with such a keen eye for detail, his arguments are vitiated by weak research. Categorizing pop songs, he merely produces a list of titles "put down as they come to mind". Hogart's deficiency in humour may be a factor in his distaste for mass culture.



Snaekbite Sonnet by Max Phillips (Abacus, £9.99)

Since the age of ten Nicholas Joseph Wertheim has been obsessed by Julia and her auburn armpits. Nine years older than himself, she's flaky, beautiful and bohemian, and not above giving him the eye in Melody's Ice Cream Parlour. Destined to float in and out of his life for the next 20 years, Julia prefers men who treat her bad and take her to Paris. In the meantime Nick has to make do fantasising about high school girls and their "marshy" regions in the privacy of his suburban bedroom. A sweet and sexy memoir of American adolescence in the Seventies but really as superfluous as the above mentioned hair.



Café Europa by Slavenska Drakulic (Abacus, £6.99)

According to Croatian journalist Slavenska Drakulic, at the heart of every Eastern European city there's a Café Europa. It's a name that promises all the goodies of the West – creamy cappuccinos, rich chocolate cake and reams of loo roll – and cocks a snook at established values. In a series of sparkling personal essays (including reflections on why she's never worn her Kenzo suit and a bad experience at the Cheltenham Literary Festival), Drakulic examines the continuing East West divide, and her own ambivalent feelings to her communist past. A book that will catch you out in prejudices you never knew you had.



Audiobooks



Microserfs read by Matthew Perry
Plain Tales from the Hills read by Martin Jarvis

Audio is exactly the right medium for ADouglas Coupland's disturbing, very American, but strangely engaging *Microserfs* (HarperCollins, 3hrs, £7.99), a high-tech totally switched-on version of *Friends* which takes a peek into the lives of a cohort of young computer nerds making a bid to escape from the all-powerful Microsoft to become cyberlords in their own right. Acutely socially observant and very funny.

Rudyard Kipling's *Plain Tales from the Hills* (CSA, 6hrs, £11.99) is too often assumed to be a rah-rah for the Raj collection for hoary Henries with a hankering for howdahs. They are in fact largely love stories, full of timeless characters and remarkably perceptive on the human condition. Read with wisdom and affection by Martin Jarvis.

Christina Hardyment

Who's reading whom

Shema Mackay finds sufficient self-effacement in Alec Guinness's 'My Name Escapes Me' (Hamish Hamilton)

"I'm rather hooked, in a dipping-in, dipping-out, fashion on Alec Guinness's 'diary of a retiring actor'. Although written for publication – Charles Moore was the protagonist, with the idea of snippets for the *Sunday Telegraph* – it is clever and unselfconscious. Guinness muses on whatever catches his fancy: the death of Rod Rumm, the national lottery, trips to the theatre, birds in the garden, the odd exodus from retirement to odd voice-overs. Lucid, witty and urbane."



A perfect fit: Claire Gervat tries on her new Levi's

photograph: Tony Buckingham

These jeans were made for me

Claire Gervat discovers the joys of jeans that are made to fit you — not some man

I've always thought that Professor Higgins must be the influence behind the jeans industry. "Why can't a woman be more like a man..." Why else would manufacturers determinedly continue to make denims in a "one-size-fits-all" design, when most women's shape is so different from men's?

Only in the past 15 years or so have the leading brands introduced designs especially for women that don't ignore the existence of hips, and a lot of the high-street chain stores also make their own ranges. But unless you happen to conform to the "standard" proportions used in mass production — which are, after all, only an average, and a Fifties average at that — then you may as well give up on the idea of buying jeans at all. I certainly had.

Until just over a week ago, that is, when I walked out of the Original Levi's Store in Regent Street, London, wearing a pair of jeans that fitted impeccably, feeling extremely happy (I used to walk out of jeans shops feeling there must be something terribly wrong with me). For in the basement of that shop is a corner devoted to the new Personal Pair scheme, which brings the techniques of mass-customisation to the clothing market and enables women to find the perfect denim cut for their combination of waist, hip and navel-to-back-waistline (through the legs) measurements.

First, you ring to make an appointment for a

fitting. At the store, in a special section rather than in the middle of the shop floor, you are measured up (waist, hip and rise) by one of the specially trained saleswomen. From a wall of drawers, she selects a pair of jeans that seems likely to fit your shape; if that's not right you try another (including leg length; there are close to 7,000 possible combinations). When you have a pair that's a perfect fit, the legs are turned up to the length that you choose. Then all your details are entered into the computer and sent by modem straight to the factory in Belgium. And having paid up your £65, a premium of around £15-£18 on off-the-peg styles, you walk out.

Delivery to the store is promised within 21 days, although Levi's hopes to complete all orders within seven working days — and mine was ready in less than a week. I left the shop wearing my new jeans and have been wearing them every day since then — amazed by this revolution in clothes-making. But why has it taken such a long time for mass-customisation to be applied to clothes, when the car industry, for instance, has been using it for quite a while?

Bart DeBouvier, special projects manager for Levi Strauss & Co Europe, thinks it's because trousers are much more complex. "Tailoring has existed for a very long time, but no one's ever really ventured into doing mass-customisation in clothing, primarily because it has to do with fit, the whole feel of the cloth and so on."

The idea for Personal Pair was triggered in the mind of Sung Park, an American software developer, by a visit to a tailor in Hong Kong who made him a suit in 24 hours. Sung Park began to wonder whether the principles of individual tailoring could be made to work on a much larger scale. After some research in the US, he discovered that jeans were something that most women owned and wanted to wear but found it hard to buy. He spent the next three years, together with a small group of people, putting together the technology for Personal Pair, as well as thinking how it would work in the store, in manufacturing and so on. Then he got in touch with Levi's, who showed interest in the idea and ran a test in the US in the spring of 1994, when that test proved successful, they launched the scheme in America.

It's taken another two years to bring it to Europe. DeBouvier explains that they wanted to see how the whole project continued in the US. "As the success in the US increased and a lot more people heard about it, we started hearing rumours in the trade that it was something that was needed," he says, "and at that point we decided to launch here in Europe. We consider what we've launched in the store in London and in another Levi's Original store in Sheffield a test for the European market as well. It's a test of whether we have the right styles, what other colours and fabrics customers may want us to

do. So there will be a trial phase for about four months, and then we will decide where we go."

For the moment, Personal Pair is available here in stonewashed indigo and a slightly tapered leg only, and with a choice of zip-fly with a high-waist or button-fly with a slightly lower-waist. In America there are six colours available, including black, the most requested colour so far in the comments book at the two British stores. "We are in the process of preparing to add the black, and potentially other colours as well, as of next year," says DeBouvier.

At last it seems that the phrase "consumer choice" will start to mean something. And the concept could spread to other clothes. Someone in America is even doing an experiment with shoes. DeBouvier is optimistic: "It's potentially the beginning of a whole new era. Every consumer wants to be seen as an individual... Personal Pair is one way to express that."

So it seems that from now on the biggest problem women will have in finding jeans that fit is deciding what to do with the time they used to spend in changing rooms being told by Prof Higgins's disciples that their waist was "too small".

The Personal Pair service is available at the Original Levi's Store, 174-176 Regent Street, London W1 (0171-287 4559); and at 19 High Street, Meadowhall Centre, Sheffield (0114-256 8471). Call for appointments.

Shannon Ryan

Nurse, 28

My jeans are by Just Jeans, I bought them in Australia. I'm quite pleased with these but I have a lot of trouble finding the right size. A lot of sizes stop at 14 and I need them bigger than that. I hate shopping altogether so I tend to stick to the same brand. I've got two other pairs like this. I think the Levi's made-to-measure is a really good idea but it's too expensive, I wouldn't pay as much as £50 for a pair of jeans.



Claudia Southgate

Student, 21

My jeans are from Karen Millen and I'm quite happy with them. I've got a lot of jeans at home and I tend to go for the men's fit because I don't like the way that women's jeans taper in at the bottom. I've just bought some Levi's ladies fit but I'm not very keen on them. I love shopping but I don't often go shopping for jeans because it is a bit of a problem. I'd definitely pay £65 for jeans which fitted me perfectly.

Dain Tag

Ex-Teacher, 47

I've got no idea what brand of jeans these are, I don't like them though, they're uncomfortable because they don't fit properly. I do have one other pair of jeans and I like them but I have a great deal of trouble shopping for jeans, I don't like having to try on so many different pairs. I would probably buy the Levi's I don't think it's too much money to pay because jeans do last for a long time.



Nathalie Ellis

Student, 23

I like Katherine Hamnett jeans, but usually it's impossible to find the right fit. I need them long in the leg and small in the waist but if I find the right length the hips are always too big or vice-versa. I'll see a really nice pair in a shop but when I try them on I'm almost always disappointed because the legs are too short. I've got loads of pairs at home that I don't wear. I think the Levi's made-to-measure are a brilliant idea and I wouldn't mind paying the extra.

Julie Vince

London Transport Museum, 31

These are Levi's 591s. I'm quite happy with them but I have trouble finding one's I do like because they are never long enough in the leg. I've got at least two pairs at home which I don't wear, I buy jeans that are the right length but then find the cut very uncomfortable. I'd rather pay £65 for a pair of made-to-measure jeans than pay less for another make that would sit at the bottom of my wardrobe.



Emma Moore

Art Student, 24

My jeans are from M&S, they're cut short in the leg and are a good fit. I'm quite small so I have trouble finding jeans, they're either too high-waisted or too long in the leg. I've got about ten pairs at home which I don't wear, I buy them thinking I like them and then discover they're all wrong. Buying jeans is a total nightmare which I avoid at all costs. The Levi's made-to-measure service sounds like a great idea, it's not too expensive since you only need one pair every two years.

Abigail Rayner

...but which jeans really rule America?

I recently found my own perfect pair during a working holiday in Western Montana. I needed some new jeans as my two pairs of standard-issue Levi's just weren't enough to keep me legged up amidst all the mud and manure. What could have been a nightmare, however, turned out to be an unexpected pleasure — once I knew what to buy.

Here in Britain, we've been sold the myths and romanticism of the American West so often that we've come to expect it, despite the incongruity of it all. Lee claim to be the "genes that built America", whilst Levi's latest advertising glut includes glossy images of "original wearers" such as "Julius, 69, rancher, Colorado".

However, there's one brand that has carved out a unique place in rural America's workwear and fashion markets. Essential cowboy and cowgirl attire these days includes a good pair of boots, a trusty set of spurs — and a pair of Wrangler jeans. They're endemic in the US, and are in many ways a symbol of the modern West, where the past meets the present and roping and branding sit quite comfortably alongside satellite dishes and pick-up trucks.

Today's Wranglers were



originally designed in 1947 by a chap called Rodeo Ben. They were also designed for a purpose, and with particular people in mind. It's all in the name. The double-stitched seam was moved to the outside leg, to avoid painful chafing during long hours in the saddle. The bottoms were cut to fit over boots, and the legs were cut long to keep the jeans on the boot whilst riding. This practical measure has become a point of fashion too — ankle-flapping Wranglers are out of vogue.

Since the mid-Seventies Wrangler have been the official jeans of professional rodeo riders. They're endorsed by champion bull-riders such as Ty Murray, and big-time stars of New Country such as George Strait. They're everywhere. Living amongst ranchers, ropers and the rodeo fraternity, I readily succumbed to the inevitability of what to buy and set off for a large Westernwear outlet, in Missoula, Montana, to get myself kitted out. It's easy to get distracted from the serious business of denim

acquisition in a place like Western Sportsman. There are glitzy outfits, belts, buckles and more checked shirts than you can shake a stick at; boots galore, and plenty of hats and horse tack.

There were other brands of jeans in the store. But the sheer range and volume of Wranglers was staggering. An alarmingly friendly assistant, with a big, silver-grey hairdo and a fringed Western dress, managed to seem as if she really cared and delivered practical advice like I've overheard — "They'll shrink up maybe half an inch in the leg, honey, so go with long; we wear 'em long out here, you know". It's also reassuring that "out there", it doesn't matter how big you think your bottom is. They're always seen a bigger one.

I left 20 minutes later, unflustered, less than \$30 poorer, and having undergone an enjoyable, distinctly Western and totally painless experience.

Back in London, I can't wear my new jeans for riding and wrangling, but that doesn't matter. And if in a year or so I need another pair, I'll gladly do the whole thing again. Unfortunately, the £300 air ticket may just sour the thrill of it all.

Liza Millet

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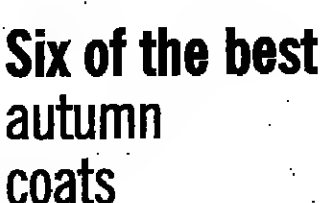
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Louise Levine

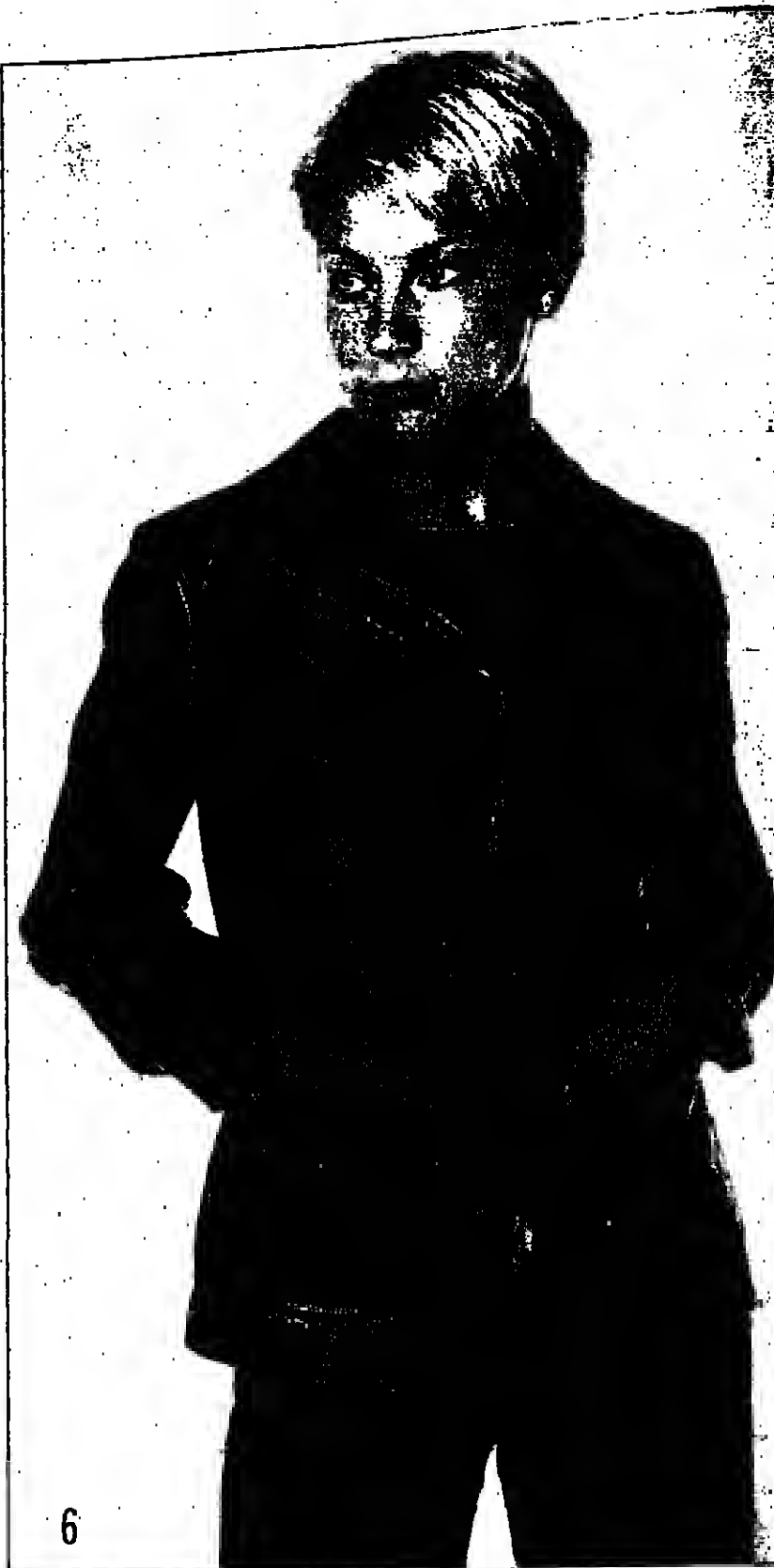


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هكذا عن الأهل

One man's conservation is another's vandalism: Hamish Scott reports on a feud in Dorset

As in so many cases, the present conflict has its roots in good intentions. In 1994, local children on a Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme helped clear litter from the common. This small

Nature conservation is, at least in theory, a cause that few would disagree with. Unfortunately, as Breach Common demonstrates, the experts are not always in agreement with the public over quite what the management implies and, particularly on common land, their assumptions may be fiercely challenged. One man's conservation can be another's vandalism.

The Friends grew ever more determined to

restore the common to its former glory. They considered grazing livestock and investigated grants for cattle-grids and fences if the necessary permissions could be had. They planned interpretative boards, parking sites and disabled access. They restored one of the silted ponds

By Clive Fewins

"From the quality of these sightings we

To Dr. Birks the task of picking shattered animal bodies off roads and intricately examining them is not overly gruesome. For four years he cut his teeth

Finding a body is not the only means of proving the pine marten exists in England and Wales. Dr Birks' colleague, John Messenger, has been working on baiting sta-

Reports of possible sightings in England and Wales should be made to Dr Birks at 3, Knell Cottages, Harcourt Road, Malvern WR13 5PS (01684 575876) or John Messenger at 16, Ithon Close, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1688 (01597 825536)

tions – tunnels with a lure at the end. As the animal exits after grabbing the lure, a small piece of hair is removed. This can be examined under a microscope to check whether it belongs to a pine marten.

Then there are scats – the droppings. Sweeter, herbier and less offensive than those of the polecat, these, too, can be analysed. Yet Dr Birks feels that he and John Messenger are now getting so

Yet we have tangible proof of the heat in the form of first-class hay, piled to the roof of the barn. By a stroke of luck, the crop was late: we had run sheep on the ground earlier, and the field was not ready to cut until early July. Then a long-range forecast told everyone that the next week was the one to go on holiday, because no cloud was going to enter the sky for the next six days.



The heat also put fire into our solitary fig tree, which produced as never before. Several times I tried to count the fruit, and made the total well over 200, most of them out-and-out thumpers.

Later came huge crops of blackberries and hazelnuts - although, as usual, squirrels hid the nuts before they were ripe. Whenever I walked up the lane, I could hear the brutes chewing and rustling in the canopy overhead, and the road was carpeted with spat-out shells.

The principal players were two fox cubs, born and brought up in the wood above our fields, ably supported by their parents, with at least one hedgehog showing strongly in a roll-on part. As soon as my wife began putting out food at the top of the garden, we were ensured of a sparkling, nightly cabaret.

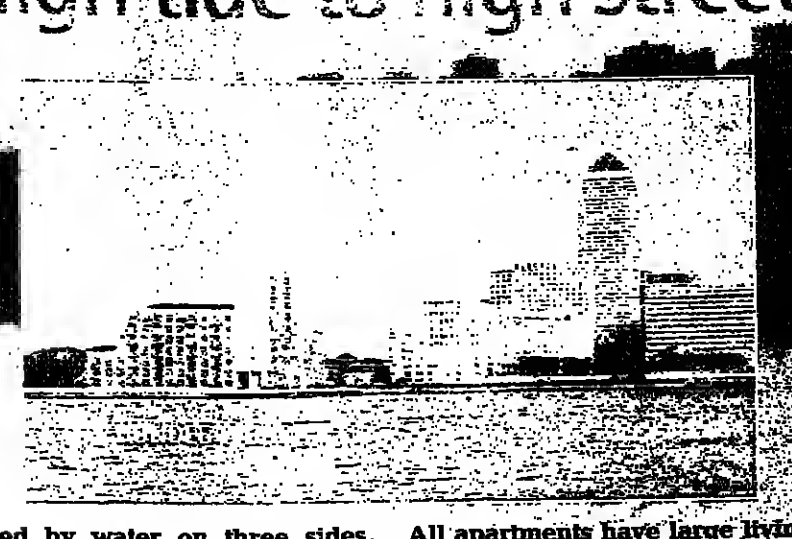
While all this was in progress, we would watch entranced, from no more than 20 yards away. Provided we kept still, the show would continue without interruption until it was too dark to see.

Now the family has dispersed; and although the night is still rent by occasional shrieks, nobody comes to feed as the light goes down. The show is over for the year—but while it lasted, it was magic, and certainly far better than any film.

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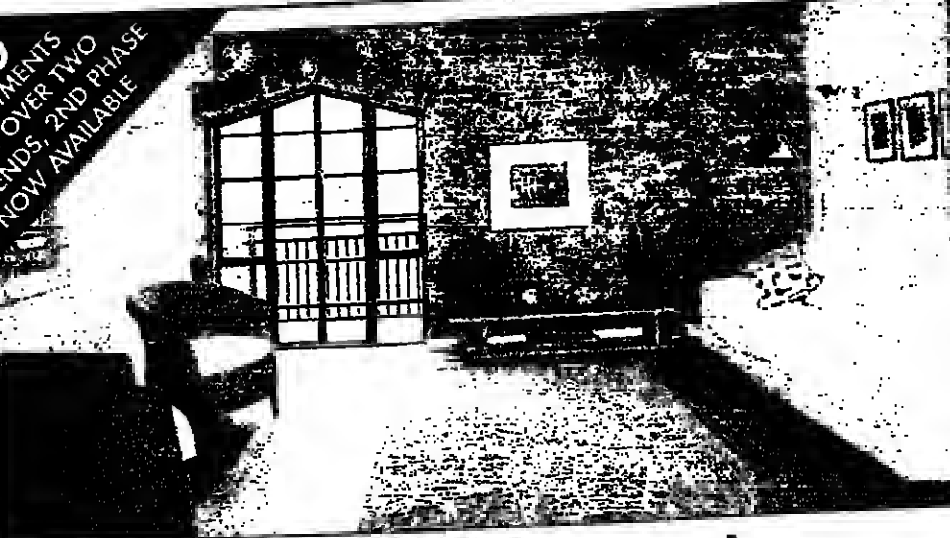
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Boats and houses share a river outlook

A new development along the Thames is combining the interests of houseboat owners and landlubbers. By Penny Jackson

In the tiny bathroom, the head of a swan suddenly pops through the window, perfectly encircled by the port hole. Some head is pushed its way, and then back to the sink.

Life in the Taylors' houseboat on the Thames is far from ordinary, yet it is one they would not swap for solid ground.

As housing developments have sprung up along the river, those who live on the Thames have felt themselves to be increasingly vulnerable. There are no laws protecting the rights of houseboat owners and some developers take a dim view of the hotch-pot of river craft moored in front of their upmarket homes.

Yet the Taylors' experience shows that there can be a meeting of minds.

Five weeks ago they moved their converted coal barge on to spanning new moorings provided by a developer. Until the regeneration of the Chiswick site at Corney Reach, their boat was moored alongside an industrial wasteland. Now, instead of looking on to a derelict warehouse and open land, they have a view of three, quite different, developments.

"We miss all that space, though. We used to have wonderful bonfire parties there," laughs Alison Taylor. "But we were prepared for the changes, and Hounslow, who owned part of the land, involved us from the beginning."

Indeed, it is the enlightened approach taken by the local authority that has enabled the seven resident boats to remain at Corney Reach. When Hounslow council sold its site to Ideal Homes, now part of Persimmon, it insisted that they provide a community building, a public pier, moorings and access to the foreshore. A trust – the Corney Reach Development Trust – was set up to manage the facilities

needed by the houseboat owners.

Alison Taylor believes this should be a model for all Thames developments. "We want to encourage a real mixture here, so that people can take trips on the river, use their own boats, explore the foreshore. It is not enough just to construct a river walkway," Mrs Taylor, who is education officer of the Thames Explorer Trust, runs study groups from the community building, and there can be few people who know the Thames as well.

Seventeen years ago she and her husband Mike, a BBC film editor, bought an old Humber barge and set about making it their home. They are still expanding into new areas of the boat. The wheelhouse has just become a dining room; part of the engine room is earmarked as a bedroom for their daughter, Lisa. Their son, David, swings on to a shallow platform bed that was once a refuge from the chaos below.

"We did everything ourselves and the first few years were very difficult. I can remember going into labour and having to crawl around under plastic sheeting because Mike was fixing the roof," says Alison.

"It wasn't always easy having small children on a boat. We had to have very strict safety rules. And there were times when I would have loved to have had a door and a garden, instead of a hatch." But the early years of discomfort are long gone. "It can get too warm now. Its like living in a steel box, lined and panelled. I'm always throwing open the portholes," she replies to the predictable question, "but isn't it cold in winter?"

What has not changed over the years is the Taylors' affection for the river, which is why they want to see a revival of the life on it, not just beside it. Developers hold the key, but the impetus needs to come from the plan-

ners and local authorities, Mrs Taylor believes. It cost Persimmon £250,000 to put in the facilities needed by the wider community. Certainly there is nothing of John Gummer's "executive ghetto" about the place. An open view of the Thames cuts through the heart of the buildings.

It is a difficult balance to achieve. There will always be those who wish to live behind security gates. But the principle of public access to the Thames has meant miles of new walkways, from the Docklands to the upper reaches of the Thames. At Battersea, Berkeley Homes' Riverside Plaza hopes to attract non-residents with a health club, restaurant, wine bar and offices on the development. And as for life on the water, Paul Vallone, sales and marketing manager, thinks people who buy along the Thames want the river to be more than just a sterile backdrop. "Not oil tankers all day, perhaps, but they don't mind a few tatty barges."

Further up the Thames, at Delta's Richmond Bridge development on the ice rink site, £13m-worth of property has been sold since the latest phase of homes was launched a week ago.

But however magnificent a development, a flat with a view is not the same as a bathroom with a porthole. "The sun bounces off the river, and with the steam rising you get this ethereal light effect," says Alison Taylor. And the swans? "We had to put up with one that would suddenly poke its head through the porthole and hiss at you."

Richmond Bridge sales centre 0181-744 0113; Persimmon Homes, Corney Reach – Allen Briegel 0181-742 7477; Berkeley Homes, Riverside Plaza 0171-801 0549

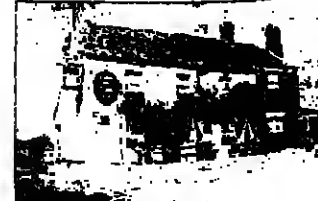


At home on the river: Alison, Mike, Lisa and David Taylor

Photograph: Nik Strangelove

Househunter

Ampney Crucis, Cirencester



Anyone longing to live in a Apul may be interested to hear that The Butchers Arms, on the edge of the village of Ampney Crucis, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, is for sale. It has permission granted for conversion back to residential use. The Cotswold stone house has a late-Victorian red-brick extension and, at present, four bedrooms and one bathroom. The bar downstairs could be removed to give a drawing room, dining room, large kitchen/breakfast room and sitting room. There are views over farmland and a good-sized garden and a paddock. Price guide £195,000, through John D Wood (01285 642344).

For what it's worth

A personality clash between buyers and sellers is a cause of almost 10 per cent of the deals that break down, says Knight Frank. Vendors are upset by buyers who dither; buyers resent people who sell a home knowing it to have problems. They suggest that owners get a pre-survey done, to give early warning of any pitfalls.

Sellers can be as indecisive as buyers, says Winkworth. At the first sign of trouble they withdraw their property from the market – or refuse even to put it up for sale until their offer is accepted on a new home. Not surprisingly, life is easier when someone buys after having rented. In South Kensington, Winkworth sells up to 10 per cent to those renting; in Kensington (swelled by overseas buyers) 50 per cent, and in Streatham, 50 per cent of those selling start by renting. Most people in this area are moving from flats to family houses, where there is the greatest shortage.

property • residential

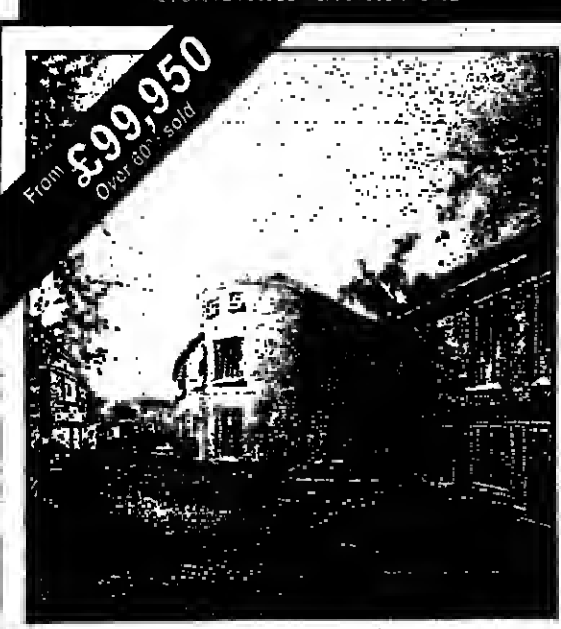
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How to become the proud owner of a slice of Europe

Advice on buying property abroad is at hand. By Geoffrey Pilgrem

British agents offering "resort homes abroad" no longer force a smile when asked "How's business?" After six years of stagnation, the market is improving.

The upturn is spread around the traditional areas of interest, according to The Federation of Overseas Property Developers, Agents & Consultants. These being the Algarve, the Spanish costas and the Riviera; the Canaries and the islands of the Med; the French and Italian countryside; and the ski slopes of the Pyrenees and the Alps. Interest in Florida is also increasing.

The recession stemmed the stream of free advice in the media about buying a home for pleasure in another country. Most of it was elementary, repetitive, and sadly necessary: don't buy a snip from a bloke you meet in a bar, even if he's the son of an archbishop and has become your lifelong huddy after the third drink.

More sophisticated advice urged careful thought about where and how you wanted to live. In which area of which country? On a coast or inland? How easy is access by road, rail, sea and air? Holiday or permanent use? An apartment? A villa, however defined? A penthouse with the necessary built-in security? And don't forget to add the necessary percentage for local taxes and legal fees to your price limit.

Throughout the Seventies and Eighties, exposure to advice was difficult to avoid. Owning a home overseas for fun became a normal expectation for the successful and the lucky. Upwards of 300,000 British couples bought a piece of Europe during those two decades. They were all educated by the media to exercise reasonable caution. Those who got it wrong had either neglected their homework,



The Algarve: on the up?

or they hadn't used a solicitor. Or they'd simply picked the wrong place.

But during the past six years media coverage of the overseas property market has been thin. And the handbooks on the subject are out of print – and out of date. So most of today's generation of prospective buyers are starting from scratch. With rare exceptions, they are also first time buyers abroad. Short of an expensive Grand Tour, how can they educate themselves?

An international property show with a wide choice of varied locations provides the opportunity for an economical crash course. And there's one handy next weekend, if you are within reach of London's West End, at The Cumberland Hotel at Marble Arch.

"We have around 50 exhibitors," said show organiser Ian Dougal, "offering thousands of homes in hundreds of locations. They're all experts on their preferred areas and they're all looking forward to an even better year in 1997. We even have lawyers and international removals people on hand."

A selection of exhibitors have optimism in common. "There's increased interest in all our locations," said Heleoa Bailey of Knight Frank. "The Costa del Sol, The Riviera, Tuscany..."

Islay Currie, of Currie French Properties in Cambridge, reports that sales of handsome old rural houses throughout south-west France are again picking up.

Michael Carpenter of Prime Property International of Maidenhead said: "Demand is beginning to exceed supply for luxury villas on the Algarve, although there's still a stock of middle-range property at competitive prices. Adrian Meed of European Villa Sales, Cambridge agrees, adding: "Developers with landbanks are dusting off their shelved masterplans and are again digging footings." On the Costa Blanca, three- or four-bedroom furnished villas with pools are selling steadily at around £175,000 according to Peter Mustafa of Juan Porcellanes "But," he adds, "recession hargains are becoming scarce."

In the Orlando area of Florida, rental income motivates the British, says Graham Green of Ruislip-based International Property Group. A three-bedroom, two-bathroom house with a pool could be yours for around £85,000.

At the property show you can pick brains, check locations, compare attractions and study specific properties. And it'll be safe to talk houses with anyone you may meet in the bar.

The international property show takes place at The Cumberland Hotel, Marble Arch, London W1 on Friday 11 October 12-6pm, and Saturday and Sunday 12 and 13 October 10.30am-5pm

The way of the curly horned kudu

Margaret Bradley treks through Namibia's Fish Canyon

Over two-and-a-half days, 74mm of rain fell in the Fish River Canyon – a whole year's rainfall. The gravel road was covered with treacherous drifts of sand deposited by ephemeral rivers; part of the lane leading to the canyon itself was washed away and the airstrip was filled with fissures created by swift flowing floods.

Worried and apologetic because of the state of the rough lane, the manager of the Canyon Nature Park rang to warn us that the camp could only be reached in a 4x4. But we were delighted by the unseasonal storm for, though the Fish River itself was no longer running when we arrived, water was still cascading down the creeks and seeping through the Canyon floor to replenish the permanent pools.

We drove down to base camp across mile after mile of high desert and scrub savannah. At regular intervals, interspersed with the huge oases of sociable weaver birds, we passed pale chanting goshawks on the telegraph poles, watching for prey. At ground level – amongst sand and quartzite boulders – grew fat succulents, southern Africa's answer to the cactus.

Some 110 miles from the town of Keetmanshoop, invisible until you are almost on top of it, the Fish River Canyon is a huge tear in the face of the earth. In the mists of geological time, a sea bed was lifted miles above the level of the ocean and weathered into ranges of table mountains. Then some 500 million years ago, a fault opened up among them. Widespread by glaciation and altered by more faults and wind erosion, canyons within canyons were formed until 50 million years ago a river began to flow down them. Now 100 miles long and up to 16 miles wide, this natural wonder is second only to the Grand Canyon as a gouge in the globe.



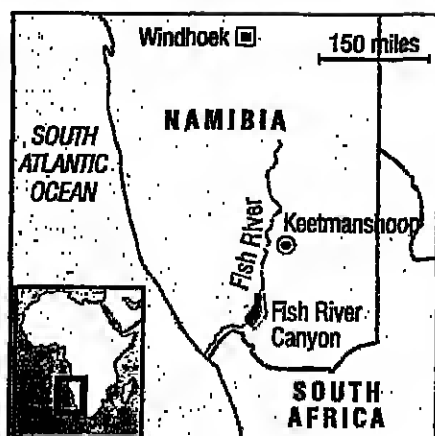
A bushman of Namibia surveys the territory – a continuous map of wildlife

Photograph: Katz/Rea/Lehman

Every year the Ministry of Environment and Tourism allows a limited number of hikers to spend five days walking 53 miles of the canyon's meanders – from the Main View Point opposite Hell's Corner to the hot springs at Ai Ais. First they must produce a recent doctor's certificate, as the only way to bring in medical aid is by helicopter from Windhoek, the capital, 700km away. And they must carry with them all their equipment, from tents to food and cooking utensils.

Wanting more comfort, we opted for a newly opened alternative, the camp at the Canyon Nature Reserve, which has been set up by Lex Van Den Bosch, a Dutch biologist and tour guide, and his partner Loes Bolle. Seven guest tents have been permanently pitched on stone bases along the very edge of the canyon with a view across miles and miles of fissures, gorges, hanging valleys and plateaux to a range of table mountains beyond. Everything is clean and simple, from the latrines to the solar heated bucket showers – simple, that is, for the guests: Lex and Loes have had to buy every item of building material, furniture and food from Keetmanshoop, some six hours' round trip away, or from Windhoek.

The evening of our arrival, just after the sun



had set leaving a streak of yellow and duck egg blue to the west, the full moon rose from the direction of South Africa's gold fields. It had a striking effect, for the fields looked as if they were resting on the brink of the world and dimming the stars all night.

The next day, we set off along the lip of the canyon, following tracks of Hartmann's mountain zebra and curly horned kudu. We saw the tiny, twin hoof prints, no bigger than a pair of 5p coins, of the klipspringer and skirted its latrines – a klipspringer and his mate may use the same place to defecate over many years. Sometimes we startled kestrels, which rose from their look-out rocks and wheeled with motionless wings ever higher and higher on the desert thermals.

By late afternoon we had reached a large, permanent pool in the river bed, flanked by a wide sandy beach, and a thicket of acacia trees. As the overhanging precipices were beginning to glow dusky pink in the sunset, Lex and Loes unlocked a stoosie box and took out cooking equipment, sleeping bags and tents, which we each set up on the sand in the position we thought would give us the best morning view.

We were not disappointed. At sunrise the cliffs turned to gold and, gloriously out of place in this usually parched wilderness, a cormorant dived for catfish in the pool.

We began our return journey over a plateau

of black limestone eroded into strange dimples that looked like egg trays for a dolls' house. Then we crossed a plain of red-brown quartzite where, in the sandy gaps – startled into life by the unseasonable rains – the pointed, curled leaves of a bulb were sprouting.

Towards the head of the valley, we came across strange, stunted plants adapting to desert life, and camel thorn trees, which seemed to reach out for our clothes with their long, grey, skeletal spikes. "Take nothing but pleasure and leave nothing but footprints in the desert," the Namibians say. Apart from a few torn clothes, we did just that – and loved every minute of it.

The only flights between London and Windhoek are operated by Air Namibia (0181-944 6181). The current lowest fares £651 (including taxes) for a minimum stay of 10 days, maximum four months. For more information contact the Namibian Tourist Office, 6 Chandos Street, London W1M 0LQ (0171-636 2924).

A return donkey to the Valley of Kings

Jack Barker avoids the crowds in Egypt – and meets a Casanova

The best way of getting to the Valley of the Kings is the way of the ancients: by donkey. The deal was sewn up within 10 minutes of our arrival in Luxor. Our boteler's son, laid-back and very young, produced a visitor's book, stuffed with recommendations.

Almost all were fulsome in their praise, and raved about the donkey trip to the Valley of the Kings. Most said "Make sure you get Mohammed". One said "Avoid Mohammed at all costs: he is slimy and ignorant". Since half the population of Egypt seem to be share this name, the advice could have been more specific. But at only £4 a head for a day tour it hardly seemed worth bargaining.

The next morning the boteler's son took us to the river. He planted us on a tourist boat – included in the overall price, I'd been assured – and the fat captain immediately introduced the concept of the enormous tip he was expecting on the way back. Blanking his persistent wheedling, I looked out over the blue waters of the Nile as we chugged across.

Luxor is a city divided. We had left the west bank, the city of the living, with the imposing temple of Karnak, and were heading for

the city of the dead, on the east, where the painted and inscribed tombs are dug into a harsh landscape of rock and sand.

The east bank didn't look especially dead: it was heaving with a tourist industry starved of tourists and it was some relief to have a guide to drag us through the touts. We were quickly slipped beyond the crowds and introduced to our mounts. Their names, apparently, were Casanova (for me) and Chocolate (for my wife). And we met Mohammed.

He was a chiselled Arab in his middle sixties who convincingly claimed to have fought on our side in the Second World War, catering division. Our donkeys were lithe, healthy beasts – although worryingly small.

Quickly we trotted towards the hills, smiling bravely at passing coaches. After a mile or so we came to the defaced glares of the Colossi of Memnon and stopped for a coffee to catch our breath before heading off up a steep donkey path.

Casanova only stood four foot tall with his ears up but my respect grew for his legs, locking straight in power surges as he doggedly picked his way up the slope and found a route

through the mountains. We progressed along narrow paths over terrifying chasms, deep into a biblical landscape of sunblasted rock. From the seat of our donkeys we looked down on world-famous sites. Salesmen bearing scarabs appeared from under rocks and strolled casually on collision courses but Casanova knew his route and brushed them aside.

Finally we crested a mountain to look down on the signposted paths of the Valley of the Kings. In the distance, flocks of tourists flooded around the best tombs. Donkeys are kept well clear, and we scrambled down on foot.

Any politeness to the guards lurking in the depths of the ancient tombs led to a request for money and within minutes my small change had run out. The last few tombs were seen in a purse-lipped meanness, proof against further demands on my wallet.

It was a relief to climb back up the mountain to find Mohammed. While we caught our breath, he protectively bargained down the price of a Coke on our behalf. Then we crossed the mountains towards the irrigated green smudge of the Nile Valley.

As we threaded along the banks of irrigation canals towards the road, I started to plan Casanova's reward. When we hit the Tarmac I stopped at a roadside stall to buy a bunch of bananas for my tireless steed. As I stood there bargaining, Mohammed hit Casanova on the haunches. I turned, clutching a hand of bananas, to see my donkey pelting off down a sidetrack.

You can't park a Sierra that easily. And it turned out Mohammed liked bananas.

The Brooke Clinic for sick animals has a hospital in Luxor, and suggests all visitors refuse to hire unhealthy donkeys. This consumer pressure has improved the health of all livestock used in the tourist trade. To get to Luxor you need a visa for Egypt: contact the Egyptian Consulate-General, 2 Lowndes Street, London SW1X 9ET (0171-235 9777) for more information, and check with the Foreign Office (0171-238 4503) for the latest travel advice for the region. Charter flights direct to Luxor operate through companies such as Tradewinds (01706 260000) or Thomson (0990 502999). Expect to pay around £250 for a flight.

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STEPHEN
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WELCOME to "Spot the Resort". All you have to do is identify two resorts from the descriptions in this season's brochures from Inghams Travel. The first is "Ideal for all skiers. It stretches alone - a spectacular valley - and has developed into a large popular resort whilst still retaining an intimate, friendly atmosphere".

The second "is party central. It kicks off early and finishes early (in the morning) and gets pretty large in the middle. If you go to three different bars every night, you'll still have left half of them for your next visit... the atmosphere is kicking".

The answers are: Les Deux Alpes, and Les Deux Alpes. The resort has stayed the same, only the brochure has changed. The first description comes from Ski Inghams' traditional 250-page reference work, illustrated with little snapshots of chalets, kids on toboggans and adults in brightly coloured skiwear pointing at something in the distance. The second appears opposite a full-page action shot of Les Deux Alpes in *The Edge*, a new magazine-style brochure from Inghams, the first big tour operator to offer "the full-on snowboard experience".

As the *Good Skiing Guide 1997* rather alarmingly accepts, snowboarding is "here to stay: only a sporting Luddite can continue to maintain that it is a passing fad that has already peaked". Those who work in the "inter-sports business" - they're learning, with difficulty, to avoid referring simply to "skiing" - have accepted this with more enthusiasm. It is difficult to gauge accurately how much of the business comes from snowboarding. Andrew Russell, assistant to the chief executive at Inghams, would only guess that it was "less than 10 per cent" for his company. But

it's a fast-growing slice, which is why Crystal produced a 10-page snowboard-only booklet last year (and is considering doing something similar this season). And why Inghams has now gone a step further.

The problem with trying to embrace snowboarders is that, for them, it's like being kissed by their parents. No way. A reader of *Onboard* magazine wrote in last month's issue about how "bitter" she is that "the skiing industry is now accepting snowboarding purely because... they want to cash in".

Snowboarders like being different from skiers. They dress differently, in loose "street" clothes: the literature of snowboarding is marked by a disdain for skiwear, particularly the tight, floral-print one-piece. They talk differently, too: the term "stem Christie" is as foreign to them as their "rail slide" is to skiers. (*The Edge* helpfully defines the latter, in its "Wozzat mean?" section for the inexperienced snowboarder, as "you ollie up and turn sideways to slide the edge of the board along a railing".) They are young, single and - as any middle-aged skier will tell you - dangerous.

So what *The Edge* does is take the snowboarders' side in the argument. The holidays it offers are in chalets exclusively for snowboarders because, as the brochure asks in its opening paragraph, "do you want to eat your dinner listening to some bloke in a polo-neck moaning about how the hire shop must have waxed his skis wrongly because he can't carve a right turn properly?"

After snowboarding action shots, the brochure gives the greatest prominence to the nightlife in the 10 resorts featured because, according to Inghams' Andrew Russell, who is responsible for *The Edge*, "what snowboarders do at night is as important to them as what they do during the day". Meeting snowboarders needs also involves a "drag count" of button lifts in each resort, because they are no fun on a snowboard; stocking the chalets "with the latest boards from K2, one of three sponsors of the brochure (the others are Sony Playstation, which provides the in-chalet entertainment, and

Swatch watches); and lining up "Celebrity Clinics" with eight top snowboarders.

Lest there be any doubt that it is talking their kind of language, *The Edge* is full of snowboarders' expressions: if riders are not hooning around they are usually going seriously big. *The Edge* goes seriously big on irony. On evening entertainments it says: "Scrabble and weak lemon drink evenings will be laid on, as well as outings to the local folklore museum. There will be no beer, drinking games, staying out late at nightclubs, meeting cute guys or girls, larking off at Germans..."

Although its editorial ambition is high, the brochure's commercial ambition is less so. A total of about 1,800 holidays are on offer; the Inghams group as a whole expects to sell more than 100,000 this season. But Andrew Russell says: "*The Edge* is an investment for the future: I think there's a gap in the market, and we're going some way towards filling it." Judging by sales so far, he is fairly confident of its success.

But does *The Edge* convince the snowboarding community? Eddie Sparring, publisher and editor of *Snowboard UK* magazine (call it "Suk" when you're with snowboarders, but not in W H Smith's), was quite complimentary. "It's a bit corny, a bit mainstream - but that's because they're trying not just to appeal to the existing snowboard market but also to bring in new people." His only major criticism was of the photography, which in snowboarding magazines is sensational. "Look at the photograph of Les Deux Alpes: it's terrible, and very badly reproduced. And it must be eight years old... look at the floral one-piece suit."

Perhaps I'm not getting the joke, but that does seem a bit of an own goal. Because on the previous page *The Edge* is making the familiar jibe about the "horrible flowery one-piece suit".

Because of a transcription error, the opening hours given for the SnowDome (0990 000011) on 21 September were incorrect; they are 9am-11pm every day



Life on the edge

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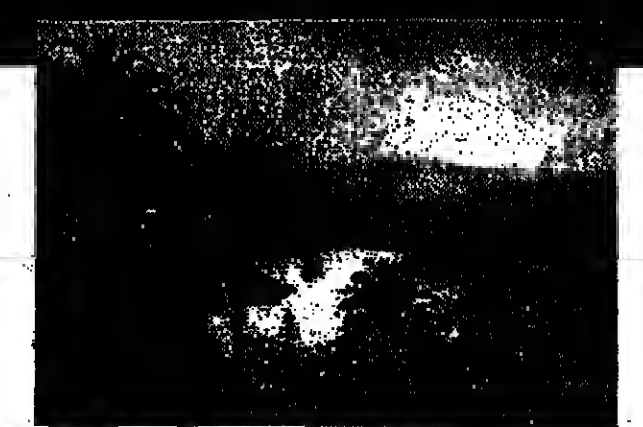
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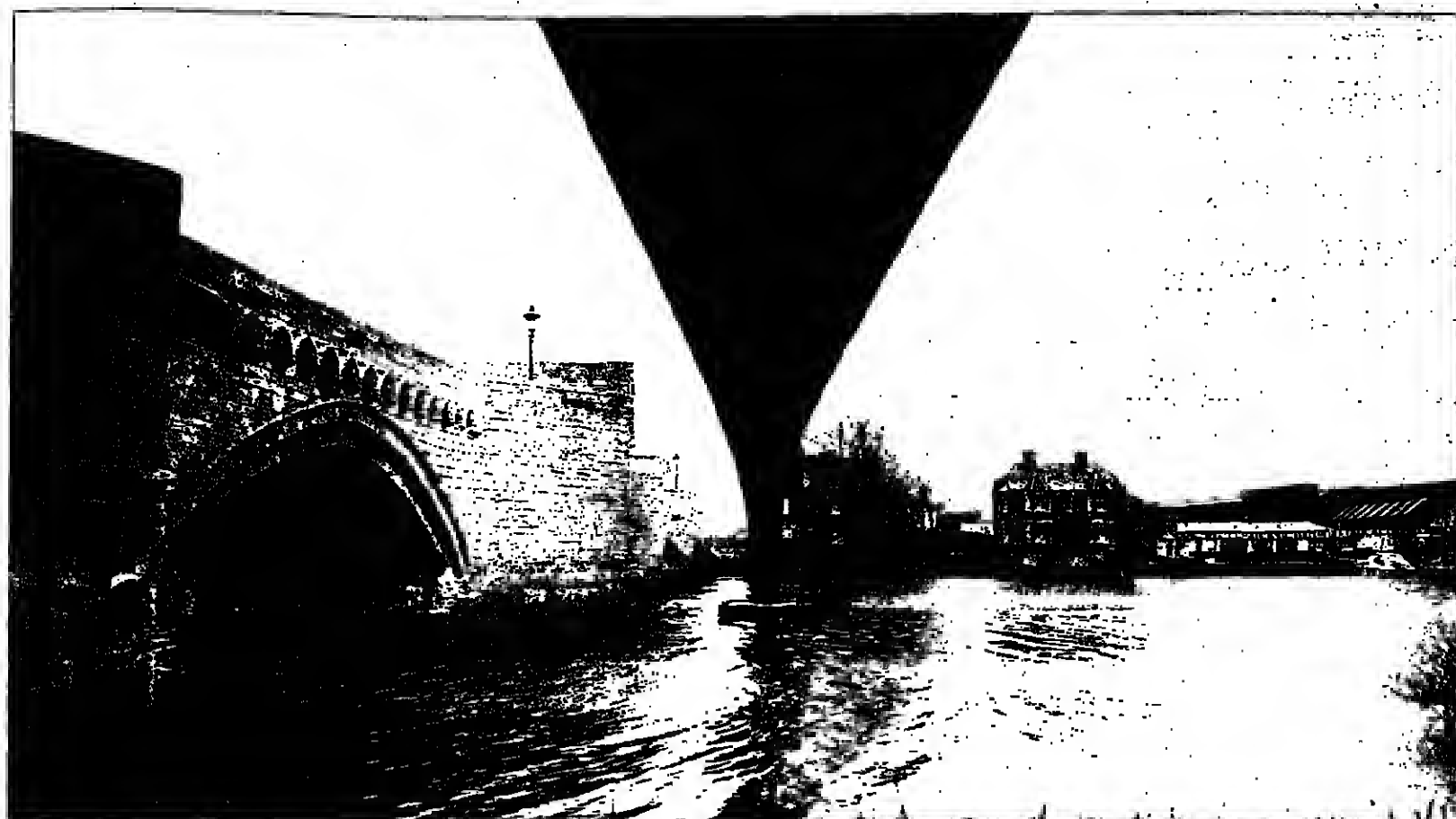
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كندا من الشمال

travel

A town of real thatchers

As the Tories head Bournemouth, Teresa Allen visits John Major's constituency



Huntingdon is a place of wartime memories, passionate regionalism, rural regeneration and Still-tou cheese. Its political heritage includes Oliver Cromwell as well as John Major. Its first Earl, one William Clinton (possibly known as Bill to his mates), took office in 1339.

This is Fen country, which is not necessarily an excuse for describing its politicians, past and present, as "wet". Ancient churches dominate a landscape which the novelist Dorothy L. Sayers described as resembling a chessboard. And indeed there is a Dorothy L. Sayers car trail which starts at Bluntham, where she lived as a child, just north of Huntingdon.

Perhaps this is one reason why road users are treated with respect in Huntingdon. Parking in the town centre of the Prime Minister's constituency, my companion cried "50p for 24 hours. Aren't Conservative authorities wonderful?" Walkers are also treated with consideration. The 26-mile Great Ouse Valley path, detailed by the local authority in a thoughtful sevco-

stage plan, winds its way around Huntingdon, encompassing some interesting bridges.

Walking south to north, just outside Huntingdon, you come across a bridge that looks as if it has been lifted off a Willow Pattern plate. Further along is the Old River Bridge on the Roman road between Huntingdon and Godmanchester. Locals tend to describe this as "not quite meeting in the middle". A helpful barman at the nearby Old Bridge Inn explained that this is due to the bridge's joint construction by the Huntingdon and Godmanchester town councils. A closer inspection revealed tasteful decoration on the Huntingdon side and a puritanical design on the Godmanchester side. Cromwell would have approved of the latter.

The Oliver Cromwell industry thrives here. Young Oliver, and his near-contemporary, the diarist Samuel Pepys, were both educated in a small, 11th-century building in Huntingdon town centre, now the Cromwell Museum. The centrepiece is a huge, wide-brimmed hat, once worn by Oliver Cromwell. Neighbouring St Ives, which also lays

claim to Cromwell, has a museum with a proud collection of Cromwellian artefacts. And there's more: Hinchingsbrook House, just outside Huntingdon – now a school but occasionally open to the public – advertises itself as Cromwell's childhood home.

Activities at adjoining Hinchingsbrook Country Park have clearly been motivated by contemporary political leadership as much as that of the 17th century. One of the many activity breaks offered is a weekend of "Back to the Iron Age", which may perhaps be taking "Back to Basics" to an extreme.

"Back to the Iron Age" happens twice a year – dates for next year's events have not yet been confirmed but are likely to be in May and September. During these weekends you learn about wattle and daub, domestic crafts and thatching. Judging by the many well-preserved thatched cottages, skilled thatchers have always been in demand in the area. It is also possible to "get on your bike" (or hire one) at nearby Graham Water, and cycle around the park.

The District Council supplies tourist information which states, a little peev-

ishly: "As subsidies diminish and competition from the European market increases, farmers are looking towards diversification to make a living". Fruit picking at local farms, flour milling for tourists at the 17th-century watermill at Houghton and "watching the mysterious honey bee at work" at Grays Honey Farm in the village of Warboys are flourishing. But another farm en route, where we had hoped to stop and watch cheeses being made, rang us back sounding sad after our enquiry. "We're sorry, but we don't make cheese here at the moment, because we can't sell our existing stocks rapidly enough."

To get a different taste of the past we moved on to Warboys, one of 12 World War Two air bases in the area, chiefly used by American pilots. American handloader Glenn Miller used a transport plane from RAF Alconbury on his last flight. Alconbury remains a US Air-base and offers tours for groups. A local authority leaflet suggests that Huntingdon is more regularly flown over by military aircraft than by the birds. Perhaps that's appropriate in a region of political high fliers.

Road users are treated with respect in Huntingdon (above). Photograph: Brian Harris

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any station in Holland for £49 return. This could take you to the German border, or as far as Maastricht. The only catch is that, on overnight sailings, you have to pay an extra £6 each way for a reclining seat.

Trouble spots

Advice from our source in the Foreign Office:



Albania (above): Avoid remote areas, keep valuables secure and do not carry large amounts of cash. Take care when in rural areas. Travel with a local guide who can ensure that local customs and traditions are not inadvertently breached.

Bulgaria: Do not accept any food or drink from strangers as there is a risk it may be drugged. Vehicle theft, including armed hijacking, has become more frequent. There have also been shootings in public places and a small number of explosions involving home-made devices.

Moldova: Avoid non-essential travel to Transnistria (north-west Moldova), which is not under Moldovan government control and where the security situation is unpredictable.

Greece: To counter the continuing threat posed by boat thieves, the

Greek authorities have announced measures to tackle the problem, including a 50-strong police unit with the specific task of protecting the coast of Corfu from incursions by criminals.

India: There is a serious risk of kidnapping in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Avoid travel to all parts of the state apart from Ladakh. Travel to Ladakh should be by air or via Manali in Himachal Pradesh. Militants have held hostage two Britons since July 1995 and murdered a Norwegian tourist in August 1995. Six Indian tourists were abducted from their houseboat in Srinagar and murdered in July 1996.

Travel advice for many other destinations is available from the Foreign Office on 0171-238 4503, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/> on the Internet, and on BBC-2 Ceefax page 564 onwards.

Visitors' book

Samburu Lodge in Samburu National Game Reserve, Kenya

Game seen today

4.8.96 "Lioness and cubs (we saw them suckling and had a puncture 10 feet away!!)" - Anon

7.8.96 "We saw everything except lions but still had a great time" - Men from 16th HGS, USAF

18.7.96 "We've seen a herd of 45 elephants heading towards the mountains for food. Saw lots of baby elephants literally 10ft away from our bus, eat your heart out David Attenborough" - Bean family, Yorkshire

4.4.96 "Where are all the cheetahs?" - Ann, USA

9.4.96 "Dear Ann, USA - we saw three cheetahs having a rest! (and much more)" - Nicola and Kathleen, Wales

Birds seen today

2.4.96 "I saw some really good-looking ones with legs up to their armpits and great blonde hair" - anon

27.10.95 "Yes, big birds, small birds, most of them flying very fast" - Bwana Masharubu

24.8.95 "Two lovebirds. Hawk and hawkette" - Mr and Mrs Lundmark on their honeymoon

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entries will be displayed at the Desinations '97, to be held in London's Olympia from 6 to 9 February next year. All entries must be accompanied by an official entry form - which you get by sending a stamped addressed envelope to Wanderlust (Photo Competition), PO Box 1832, Windsor, Berks SL4 6YP.

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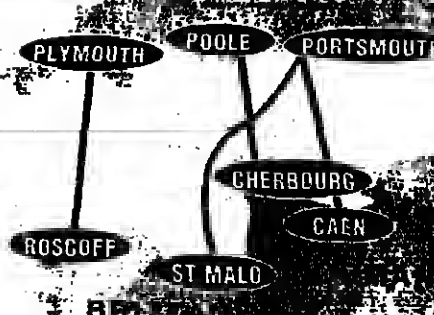
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مركز ابن الأصيل

Naval gazing and the joys of Victory

The Gurney family visits Portsmouth's historic ships and dockyard. Interviews by Hamish Scott

Portsmouth, a naval dockyard since 1194, remains one of the Royal Navy's largest bases. The historic heart of the old yard includes a number of museums and exhibitions, besides three historic ships on permanent display. The *Victory*, Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar, is preserved in all its glory as a national icon, whilst the *Warrior*, the world's most powerful and technologically sophisticated warship when launched in 1860, has been restored to immaculate condition. The *Mary Rose*, by contrast, is an eerie relic, its timbers sprayed continuously with water to ensure its preservation. Sunk in 1545, the man-of-war was raised and brought back to dry land in 1982 in the climax of the most ambitious underwater excavation ever undertaken. Guns, clothing and personal possessions recovered from the site are on view in a separate exhibition.

Modern warships visiting the dockyard often welcome visitors, though generally not to study the more intricate details of armaments and electronics. Boat trips round the harbour allow would-be admirals to review the fleet and check on Britain's naval readiness should a new Armada be sighted in the Channel.

The visitors

Alastair and Lynne Gurney took their children Andrew, 15, Hope, 12, and Roman, seven, to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

Roman: It was a really, really good day, and I know quite a lot about sailing. On the big ship [*Victory*] the man put me in a hammock, which was really cosy, but then he said he'd stick a needle through my nose to see if I was dead. That's what they used to do, you know. After lunch I went off to play and there were all these guns and nets and things where we could have

a battle. I pretended that we'd lost a propeller and had to dive overboard to get it back.

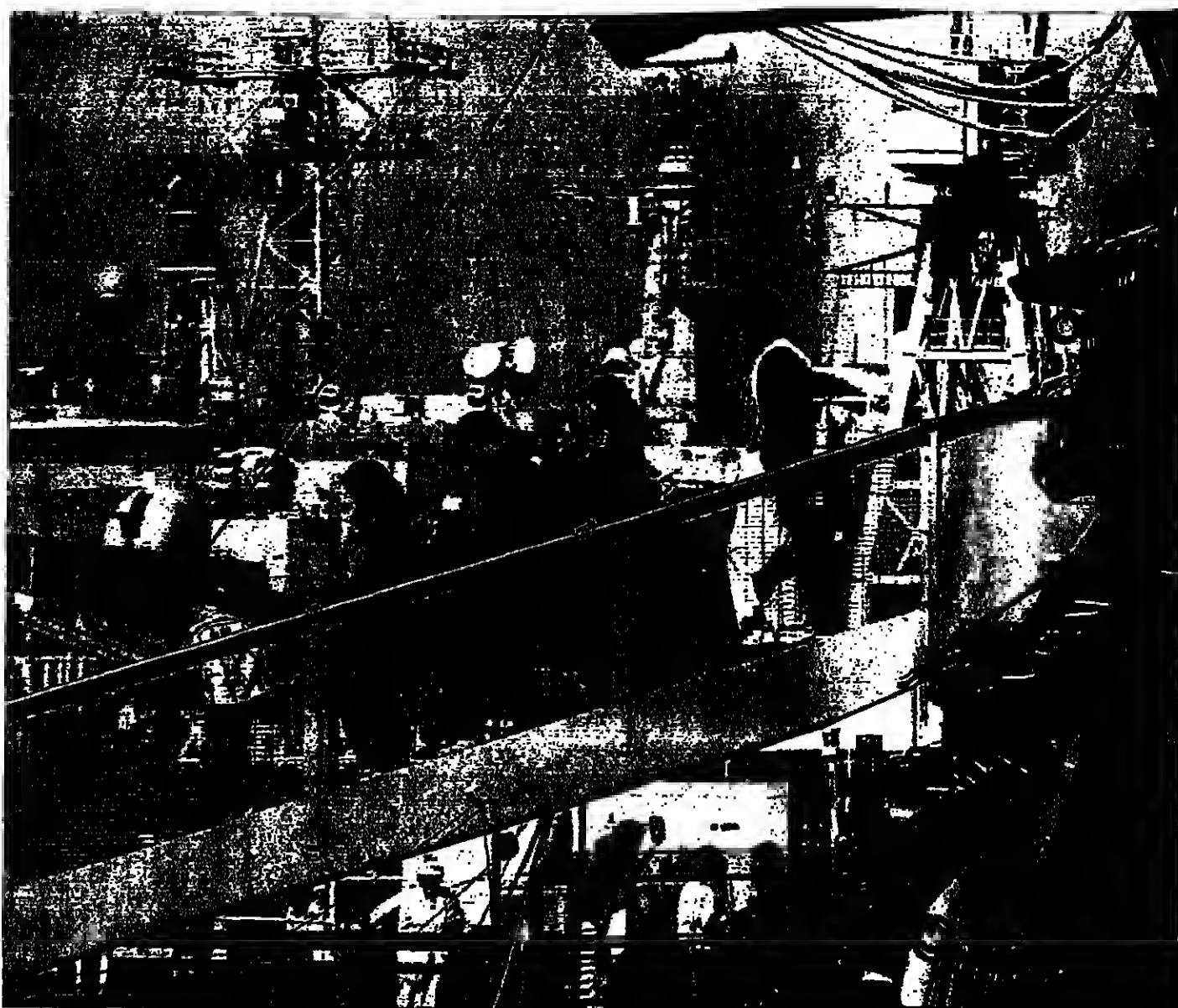
Hope: The *Victory* was brilliant. It was all so realistic, like stepping through a door and finding you'd gone back in time. The guns were really huge, and they even had the bags of grapeshot and special cannonballs that could cut down masts. The guide was good, but it was also nice to walk around the *Warrior* and explore things for yourself.

When we saw the *Mary Rose* I liked the way it was all dripping with the water, as though it had just come up from the sea. One side was rotted away, so you could see inside the decks and imagine how it was before it sank. I thought it was a really brilliant day, but I wish we'd had more time.

Andrew: It took 2,500 trees to build the *Victory*, so a lot of forest must have been cut down. I thought she was the best ship that we saw, because she was so old and graceful, but it was interesting to see how cramped the sailors were; 14 of them had to share a mess, which was just a little table in between the guns, and their hammocks were so close that they touched.

The *Warrior's* engine room was amazing, with the huge piston going up and down. The whole ship felt as though it could put to sea at any moment. I also quite enjoyed the boat trip round the frigates and aircraft carriers. The *Illustrous* uses up 200 gallons of fuel a mile, which is pretty amazing when you think about how far it goes.

Lynne: What impressed me is that three children of different ages all found something to enjoy. For the smaller child, there's scope for fun and fantasy; then there are also all the more technical details to interest adolescents.



The Gurneys disembark from *Victory*

Photograph: John Lawrence

There's far too much to do just on one day and ideally I would have made two visits. My only criticisms are the food, and the lack of helpful signposts. More than once we found ourselves separated from our destination by some gate that seemed to have been locked only to annoy us. Thank goodness it wasn't raining.

Alastair: It was remarkably impressive, particularly since the ships, the buildings and museum collections are all seen in their proper context, rather than some setting that has been artificially contrived. The Navy man who showed us round the *Victory* was excellent, but

I did find some of the staff, from the car park to the restaurant, a bit unhelpful and unfriendly. Considering the diet Nelson's crew endured, I suppose I was quite privileged to have a stoccol pie for lunch, but I did not expect the sarcastic lashing that I got when I complained.

The deal

Location: Portsmouth, Hampshire, signposted from the M27. Open 10am-6pm until 31 October and 10am-5.30pm November to February. Last tickets sold 90 minutes prior to closing. Cost: Access to the dockyard itself is free. Tickets are available to individual attractions, with

special rates for senior citizens and children. An "all-in" passport, £30.50 for two adults and a child, allows all attractions to be visited once within a two-year period (01705 861533). Food: The Tradewinds Restaurant serves salads and hot dishes, from £3.99, children's meals, £1.99, and snacks.

Crowds: 650,000 visitors a year, but the main attractions are spaced well apart. In autumn, even at weekends, there are seldom queues. Access: the disabled are limited to certain docks on the *Victory* and the *Warrior*; otherwise good. Wheelchairs available from the visitor centre. Toilets: immaculately clean and with well-equipped baby care rooms.

Fun and squalor in a medieval castle

William Hartston braves goats and gore in the reconstructed Stansted Mountfitchet village

About half-way to Cambridge along the M11, over the junction 8 turn-off, you pass a sign advertising "Stansted Mountfitchet Castle and Norman village", which seems an odd thing to have next to an airport. Following the signs to the village of Stansted Mountfitchet, things become even odder as the alternative attractions of a local windmill and the House on the Hill Toy Museum compete for your attention.

Anyway, we followed what we thought were directions to the castle and Norman village, through a gate and up the hill, past a talking tree and through the door at the top, and discovered that we were in the toy museum. Of course, we should have gone under that much larger gate with the severed heads on top of it. So we went back down the hill to the castle, where we paid the entrance fee and bought a bag of food for the animals that are kept at there.

The first animal we met, even before entering the castle, was a goat that seemed friendly but, with unseemly greed, took a huge bite out of our food bag. A brief tussle ensued, leaving the goat eating the spillage and us rescuing what we could for the sheep and chickens we expected to meet inside.

All that remains of the original castle is a small chunk of its tower. The castle itself was occupied by Richard

de Mountfitchet I, one of the 25 barons who forced King John to sign the Magna Carta at Runnymede in 1215. The rest is a modern reconstruction - it opened in 1986 - based on a mixture of historical record, a large dose of medieval myth and huge quantities of gore.

The Domesday Book lists 11 families living within the walls. The rebuilding has been done with a reasonable degree of authenticity: lots of oak, hazel and wattle and no nails; and the huts are, as far as possible, where geological surveys suggest they may have been in the 11th century - though there was not much to go on. The castle was demolished by King John's forces and its stones have been looted by villagers for 900 years. When a local businessman, Alan Goldsmith, bought the site, all that remained was an overgrown mound.

In the absence of detailed accounts of life in the original castle, the reconstruction concentrates on the squalor and violence of the Middle Ages, Hollywood style, rather than opting for an accurate portrayal of what was probably a rather tedious everyday life in a period of growing commerce and increasing social organisation. Technically, the rebuilding has been a fine achievement. The pottery, but, the dyer's hut and the blacksmith's shop each have a life-size figure giving a commentary activated by heat-sensors whenever anyone enters; but the abiding

ing mood is the one suggested by those heads above the entrance. There's a surgeon in mid-operation, who chuckles over how few of his patients survive; a man being hanged on a gibbet; a house burnt down by Saxo raiders leaving a corpse or two as evidence; a jailhouse, which few survived; and a neat little torture chamber with a warning sign for children of nervous disposition. There's a pillory to keep the kids entertained, and a mangonel - a type of catapult - that could hurl rocks 300 yards. The squalor of the age is well represented by the model who explains that "we bathe about once a month, and then only in summer".

The average 11th-century resident of Stansted Mountfitchet would probably not have encountered all the things packed into the reproduction in an entire lifetime, but this cod-medieval theme park makes a most entertaining day out. The children love the gore and the adults are amused by the squalor. In reality, though, the most dangerous aspect of life in Mountfitchet castle in the Middle Ages was probably the threat of being nibbled to death by those hungry goats.

Stansted Mountfitchet Castle and the House on the Hill Toy Museum are open daily until 10 November (after which, they say, the wind gets so strong it would blow visitors off the hill). Adults £3.85, children £2.85, concessions £3.50

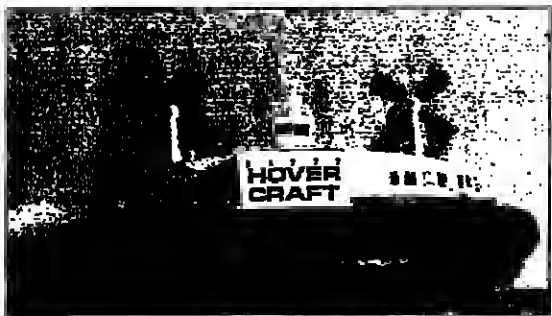
Take a car and 5 people to France for £10 with THE INDEPENDENT

Today is final day of our Hoverspeed offer. To celebrate The Independent's tenth anniversary on 7 October, we are offering readers the chance to take a day trip to France to stock up for Christmas, with a car and up to five people for £10. You can take your car on Hoverspeed's Dover to Calais or Folkestone to Boulogne routes for only £10 (£20 on Saturdays), or alternatively, travel as a foot passenger on the Folkestone to Boulogne route and pay just 10p.

To add to our anniversary celebrations we have another special offer, every person who books a day trip will receive a season ticket. The season ticket allows you to take as many day trips from Dover to Calais or Folkestone to Boulogne as you like until 30 June 1997 with a car and up to five people for only £10 (£20 on Saturdays) each time you travel.

The normal day trip fare for foot passengers is £10 and the price for a car plus five people, £55. The Channel crossings with Hoverspeed are aboard either Hovercraft or SeaCat, both of which offer duty-free goods. Exclusive to Independent readers, Hoverspeed is also offering 10% off all duty and tax free goods when you spend over £30 on one transaction at Dover, Folkestone and Boulogne land-based shops. A voucher will be supplied with your day trip tickets and is valid until 20 December 1996.

Foot passengers can travel from 16 October, car passengers from 2 October.



How To Qualify

To participate in our offer, you must collect four differently numbered tokens from the eight printed in The Independent and the Independent on Sunday. The final token, Token 8 is printed below. You will need to complete the booking form, printed right, and send it with your tokens and payment to the address shown on the booking form. Alternatively, if you wish to travel by car between 2 - 16 October, once you have collected your tokens, you can make a credit card booking by calling Hoverspeed reservations, see the booking form for further details.



INDEPENDENT HOVERCRAFT BOOKING FORM

Closing date: All applications must be received by EuroSave by 30 October 1996.

Passenger details: Party Leader: Address: _____

Day time tel: _____ Evening tel: _____

To book your day trip for travel between 2 - 16 October 1996, Hoverspeed will take credit card bookings for those taking a vehicle, please telephone 0990 246341.

To book your day trip for travel after 16 October 1996 if you are taking a vehicle or travelling as a foot-passenger, please fill in the following details.

Travel dates: Please provide us with a choice of dates of when you can take up this offer - only one choice should be a Saturday.

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No. of Car Occupants: _____

Payment: I enclose cheque/postal order no(s) _____ payable to Ferry and Port Holdings representing full payment for my day trip.

I agree to the terms and conditions of trading

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Enclose the completed booking form, full payment, your tokens and a first class stamped addressed envelope (9in x 7in) and post to: Independent/Hoverspeed Offer, EuroSave Travel Club, PO Box 181, Dover, Kent, CT17 9DE to arrive by 30 October 1996.

Terms and conditions: This promotion is subject to limited space availability. If we are unable to confirm your booking or your crossing is cancelled by Hoverspeed all monies will be returned to you, no other refunds will be made. All alternatives are subject to a £10 amendment fee. Minimum postal booking notice is 14 days, 24 hours notice must be given for telephone bookings. Travel is available through to 20 December 1996.

Maximum of 5 people per car - no trailers, caravans, motorhomes or transit vans are allowed within the terms of this offer. EuroSave will endeavour to dispatch tickets at least 10 days prior to departure. Valid passport/visas are required. Carriage by sea is subject to terms and conditions of the carrier, copies of which are available on request. For information, 1 and 11 November are French Bank Holidays. Ships in France are usually open on Saturdays in December. This offer is only valid for day trips, vehicles carrying overnight luggage will be refused at the port. A minimum of 4 hours must be spent in France.

The reservations office is open 08:00 - 19:30 Mon - Fri, 09:00 - 17:30 Sat. Telephone bookings will only be accepted for vehicle bookings for travel between 2 - 16 October 1996.

Terms and Conditions: 1. The promotion is subject to availability. 2. If EuroSave are unable to confirm your booking or if your crossing is cancelled by Hoverspeed all monies will be returned to you, no other refunds will be made. 3. All alternatives are subject to a £10 amendment fee. 4. Booking forms must be received by 30 October 1996. 5. You must take one day trip, either by car or as a foot passenger, before 30 December 1996 to receive your season ticket. Car travellers can start travelling from 2 October, foot passengers can start travelling from 16 October 1996. 6. Minimum postal booking notice is 14 days, 24 hours notice must be given for telephone bookings. 7. Car Travellers have requested your booking form, they will send you the latest version of the form together with your first day trip tickets.

8. The season ticket will entitle you to travel with a car and up to five people for £10 (£20 on Saturdays) each time you travel. The season ticket is valid for day trips only and can be used until 30 June 1997. 9. Maximum of 5 people per car - no trailers, caravans, motorhomes or transit vans are allowed. 10. EuroSave will endeavour to dispatch tickets at least 10 days prior to departure. 11. Valid passport/visas are required. 12. Carriage by sea is subject to terms and conditions of the carrier, copies of which are available on request. 13. This offer is only valid for day trips, vehicles carrying overnight luggage will be refused at the port. A minimum of 4 hours must be spent in France. 14. Photocopies of tokens are not acceptable.

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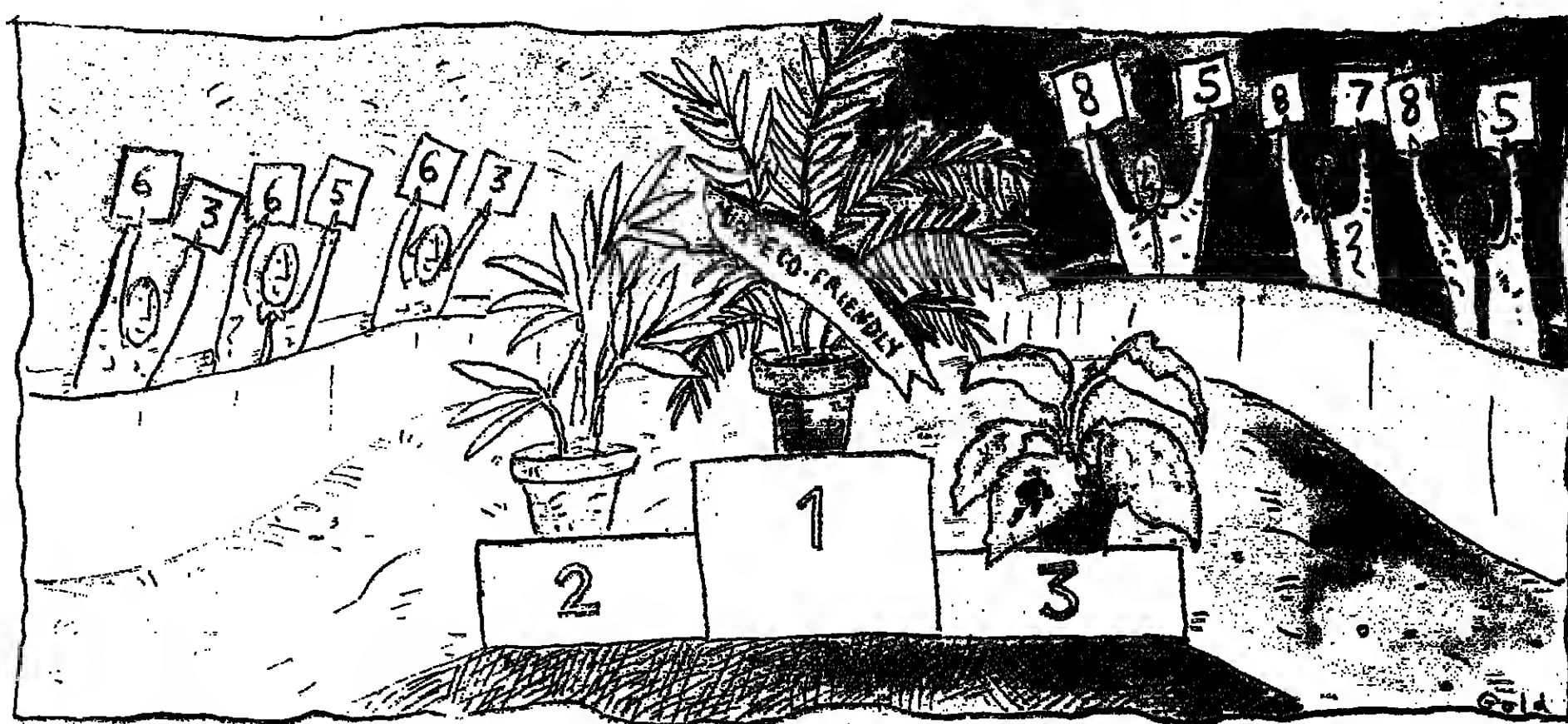
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A rescue centre plus video displays and brain-teasers. Gweek, Helston,

Cornwall. TR12 6UG (01326 221 361). Children £3.35, adults £4.95, family ticket £16, OAPs £3.95, under fours free. Open every day, 9am-5pm.

Mole Hall Wildlife Park
Otters and cubs are major attractions at this small park, with chimp, butterflies, owls, wallabies, snakes, llamas and arctic foxes. Widdington, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 3SS (01799 540 400). Children £2.60, adults £4, concessions £3.20, under threes free. Open every day, 10.30am-6pm.

Abigail Rayner

gardening



And the winner is . . .

Choosing houseplants? Go for begonias and other leafy varieties that are eco-friendly and surprisingly forgiving. By Anna Pavord

Leafiness is what you need from houseplants, even if, like cyclamen, they produce flowers as well. Greenery makes even the dingiest cell seem more hospitable, as our eldest daughter discovered when she started her university term in a room that would have had prison reformers on the phone to the *News of the World*. But among her luggage was *Matilda*, a large prayer plant (maranta), and an even bigger rubber plant which for some reason has never acquired a name. That is unusual in our family, where even visiting spider plants get christened. The plants did more than posters, Indian throws or music to make her room feel like home.

First you've got to get them there, and in a car heaped with tottering piles of Guatemalan jerseys and jars of Nescafé, it's not easy to find room for a prayer plant in full flight. But plants are so forgiving. The ones scattered about our home could be basking in a Malay jungle, or cruising through the undergrowth of a Dominican rainforest. Instead they are stuck on the window ledge of a freezing cold house and expected to make the best of it.

Not surprisingly, some cope better than others. Begonias, the leafy kind, do well with us because they positively enjoy the cool. And the rather low light that there is, for instance, in the old, shallow stoneware sink on the landing. When we came, this was the only source of water upstairs, a sink 2ft 10in long by 1ft 7in wide and only 4in deep. It is set under an east-facing sash window and, from the beginning, has been filled with houseplants.

I started with an old *Begonia maculata* that my aunt threw out when she moved house. I've lost count of the number of times I have divided it up and passed it on to friends. Sometimes it spends the summer outside in the shade, beside the back door. It makes a tall plant, the

leaves growing on strong, bright green canes. When it gets too leggy, I cut a few of the tallest stems down. You can root the tops to make new plants. The leaves, lopsided in the usual begonia way, are about 1ft long and spotted all over with silver, the spots arranged rather evenly, large and small alternating. It's flowering now, with drooping clusters of waxy pink flowers.

It gets fed when it gets watered, which is not more than once every couple of weeks, but I would guess that in our house, with stone floors and no central heating, it loses less water than it would in a close-carpeted, centrally heated room. It likes damp, that is, a damp atmosphere. Like most houseplants it loathes being wet at the roots, and it doesn't seem to like misting, either. Not that I've ever tried, but someone who had, told me it made the leaves die back.

Begonia maculata is much more compact, with furry, fat stems slowly winding round and round themselves like snakes to produce a low mound of handsome, staggeringly glossy leaves. Each one could star in a Mr Sheen commercial. They are dark, bronzy green, with ruffs of strange little red hairs round the margins and on the undersides. They are the kind of leaves that I'm tempted to sink my teeth into. The plant heaps itself up in an elegant way, each leaf fitting neatly into a space on the same plane as its neighbours. The stems are spotted with red, and are hairy like the leaves. The flowers are carried well above the leaves on strong, upright stalks. They appear in late winter.

Two new begonias have recently joined the troupe. One I bought as 'Gloire de Lorraine' but it obviously isn't, as that variety has bright green leaves and single pink flowers whereas my plant has dark, lustrous bronze leaves with the dull sheen of the best sort of satin. It's been flowering over the last couple of months (the real 'G de L' is winter-flowering) bearing the flow-

ers like cherry blossom at the shoot tips. They are bright pink and heavily double.

David Rhodes of Rhodes & Rockliffe, which specialises in leafy begonias (they put up a stunning display at Chelsea this year), thinks that mine must be 'Lady France', an old variety popular in Victorian conservatories. The growths are quite lax and when the flowers have finished, I think I'll pinch back the shoots to make them break into more growing points. The more growing points, the more flowers.

The other new begonia is an 'eyelash' type, so-called because the leaves are heavily fringed with white hairs. The stems are covered with the hairs, too, looking like wool when the leaves are unfurling and the stems short. As the stems grow, the hairs space out and become less dense. The leaves are crinkled, with points like an ivy leaf, rather than the smooth, rounded shape of *B. maculata* and 'Lady France'. They are dark, with a paler splash in the centre. The one I have is 'Beatrice Haddrell'. It is winter-flowering. It's a more compact plant than the others, about 8in high and the same wide.

I like the begonias because they like us, are undemanding and suit the particular conditions of the house - and because I've never seen a bug on them. The asparagus fern, *Asparagus densiflorus* Sprengel, which stands behind them in the sink, collects aphids as though its life depended on it (rather than the reverse), but they never cross over on to the begonias.

If plants collapse it's likely to be because they have been overwatered. Thick, sappy stems are prone to fungal attack if the compost is too soggy. If leaves are tinged with yellow (or, in the tall, cane types, too much red), you may not be feeding the plants enough. They do best if they are repotted in fresh compost every spring.

Now, reading *Eco-Friendly Houseplants*, I learn that my begonias are doing me good as

well. They have a high transpiration rate, which means they suck in nasties from the atmosphere at a greater rate than many other houseplants. 'As water moves rapidly from the soil surrounding the roots up through the plant, air is pulled down around roots adding nitrogen gas and oxygen to the soil,' writes the author, Dr BC Wolverton. 'Through a biological process called nitrogen fixation, certain microbes can convert atmospheric nitrogen gas into nitrate, a chemical that plants use as a nutrient.'

Because air inside buildings is naturally dry, a high transpiration rate in a plant means that more air (and toxins) go to the root zone where microbes absorb and convert them into food.

Dr Wolverton has spent most of his working life as a NASA scientist, researching closed life-support systems for future space stations. In this book, he assesses 50 houseplants according to their ability to remove chemical toxins from the air, ease of maintenance, resistance to pests and transpiration rate. Then he marks them out of 10. The begonias got 6.5 points.

The best-performing plants, according to his criteria, are the areca palm, *Chrysalidocarpus lutescens*, and the lady palm, *Rhapis excelsa*. Both scored 8.5 points. The areca palm transpires two pints of water every day and is the best known plant for removing the toxins associated with air indoors (most commonly formaldehyde, present in paper towels, floor coverings, carpet backings, plywood, chipboard etc).

'Eco-Friendly Houseplants' is published by Weldonfield & Nicolson at £14.99. A wide range of begonias is available by mail order from Rhodes and Rockliffe, 2 Nursery Road, Nazeing, Essex EN9 2JE (01992 463693). Send two first-class stamps for a copy of their catalogue. The nursery is open by appointment only.



CUTTINGS

After a May visit, I wrote about the *Mourées des Plantes de Courson*, at the home of Hélène and Patrice Fustier, Domaine de Courson, 35km south of Paris. Roy Lancaster and Peter Beales are lecturing there and English nurserymen are selling alongside the French. Lyndsay Mikanowski is recreating a garden in the style of Margery Fish; Pépinières de Kerfandol from Brittany are showing magnolias and rhododendrons; William Waterfield is displaying tropical fruits. Courson is open 18-20 October, admission FF60.

Dracken, once cut for cattle bedding by Welsh farmers, is now a pest. More than 200 hectares is sprayed each year in the New Forest alone. Cutting is twice as expensive as spraying with herbicide, but English Nature, working with the Forestry Commission, hope to be able to turn composted dracken into a peat substitute. If they can recoup costs by selling it, they will be able to cut rather than spray. Composted dracken, with its low pH value, would be ideal for rhododendron and many heathers.

When writing about beans (27 July), I recommended the seed catalogue of Grains Baumaux, Nancy. I received a new one this season without fuss, but Joy Richardson of Thame, Oxfordshire, was not so lucky. She got a note saying 'Nous n'expédions pas de catalogue hors de France.' Vive the EC.

WEEKEND WORK

Wind, one of the gardener's worst enemies, has been flexing its muscles again recently. Tie up any climbers that have been torn from their moorings and secure new growths of climbing roses, solanum and the like.

Lay new turf where necessary so that the grass can settle before the winter. Dig over the ground to be turfed, getting rid of all weeds. Rake the earth to a fine tilth. Use a line to keep the turves straight and lay them so the joints are staggered, like brickwork. Sift soil into any gaps and firm down by banging with a rake head.

Finish planting spring bedding plants such as wallflowers, polyanthus and forget-me-nots. The latter make a pretty under-carpet for tulips, especially the white-flowered 'White Triumphant' or the stubby, double 'Angélique'.

Clean up the ground between strawberry rows, getting rid of weeds and unwanted plants that have rooted themselves. Mulch between the rows with well-rotted compost or manure.

Plant lilies, which are best moved, like snowdrops, just after they have finished flowering. The martagon lily is a hardy, lime-tolerant species that will thrive in sun or shade. Put the bulbs about 9in apart and 4in deep, with a sprinkle of sharp sand under them to deter underground slugs. Mulch in spring with compost or leafmould. The ordinary type has dirty purple flowers with ginger anthers, but there is also a lovely white form.

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Marshall's

The biggest winner in last weekend's coup by Frankie Dettori was a man who won £550,000 on a £60 bet. Yet such outright speculation on long-odds outcomes is still a losing strategy in the long run

It was, said one of the country's leading bookmakers, a catastrophe for the bookmaking industry. Bookies collectively lost an estimated £30m, and one company, Stanley Leisure, was forced to issue a profits warning, probably the first time in stock market history that such an event has been prompted by a single day's horse racing.

Yet last weekend's coup by Frankie Dettori in winning all seven races on the card at a big Ascot meeting tells us a lot about how Britain as a nation handles its money. We all know that gambling is a big industry and that it only prospers because those who take the bets are better able to calculate the odds than those who place them. In a free, capitalist country, there is nothing wrong in grown-ups taking such gambles if they so choose.

Yet surely as surprising as the amount which the bookies lost last Saturday on this historically unique occasion, is how many punters actually had bets which could only

pay off with such a statistically outlandish result. The biggest winner was a man who won £550,000 on a £60 bet. It was such a long shot that for practical purposes it was off the scale of probabilities.

The winning odds that he received were more than 25,000 to 1 against. And yet this punter was not alone. The number of those who woo with various multiple bets as a result of Dettori's success numbered hundreds.

The one thing you can be certain about is that most of the biggest winners were drawn from the ranks of those who normally subsidise the professional punters. Nobody seriously interested in making money from betting on the horses ought to be making such outlandish wagers. But statistical research has demonstrated clearly that most amateur punters back more outsiders and fewer favourites than they should do if they are pursuing a rational, money-maximising strategy.

Those who make such bets are clearly drawn by the same irrational



JONATHAN DAVIS
INVESTMENTS

lure as those who regularly bet on the National Lottery. It is the size of the potential payout relative to the scale of the bet – and to the wealth of the individual – which is the real draw.

Such bets as the Dettori accumulator only make sense if the person making the bet knows that his own lifetime earning power is not going to free him from financial duress. He needs a bonanza, a jackpot, a goldmine to satisfy his needs. The Klondike spirit, consciously or

otherwise, is what drives him on. Sometimes miracles do occur and the bet pays off.

Yet such outright speculation on long-odds outcomes is still a losing strategy in the long run, which is why the professionals will always be found going the other way. In the stock market, "get rich quick" investors tend to be drawn to penny shares and to buy traded options, attracted by their unlimited upside potential. Now and then such investments will pay off spectacularly.

But more often than not, they do not. It is no coincidence that 90 per cent of all call options expire worthless. That is one reason why professionals in the options market mostly "write" options (ie act as the counter-party to the buyer) rather than buy them. Taking the investor's bets is a more certain way to make money over the long haul.

The truth is that attitudes to risk in the stock market, as in horse racing, are not strictly rational. Recent academic research has highlighted

how lopsided people are in their approach to money. By and large, we overpay to insure against possible loss, however small or improbable, and under-invest in things that offer steady, rather than dramatic, returns.

So, while some investors will throw all their money at long-odds speculative shares, the vast majority of Britons go to the other extreme and ignore shares altogether because they wrongly regard the risk of losing money as too high. The Weinberg report on wider share ownership earlier this year demonstrated conclusively that most people are put off buying shares by their absolute aversion to losing money.

Yet the long-term returns from buying shares in established high-quality companies, or simply from buying an index tracking fund, are quantifiably higher than most investments of similar risk. It is true that the chances of outperforming the equity market as a whole may be statistically poor. But the consolation with shares is that

you don't need to outperform everybody else in order to make a decent return over time.

The long-run average return on shares is about 7 per cent in real terms. The risk of an equity investor losing all his money, assuming he holds a diversified portfolio, and has not borrowed to finance it, is in all intents and purposes zero. The risk of losing say 25 per cent of his wealth in any one or two-year period is of course high, but over longer periods that risk diminishes too.

The fact that there is nobody to write up the odds in chalk on a blackboard does not mean that the odds are not there. But nor does it mean that we should react sensibly even if they were. As last week's dramatic day of racing showed, life would be much the poorer if we were all "dissected calculating machines" capable of working out all of life's odds correctly. They also remind us that whole industries, from insurance to bookmaking, depend on the fact that we are not.

A handout for millions when a mutual insurer floats

Norwich Union's decision to head for the stock market should mean £2bn in shares for policyholders – at least £500 each, reports Nic Cicutti

Norwich Union this week became the first of the UK's mutual insurance companies to announce plans to float on the Stock Exchange, entitling 2.9 million policyholders to a shares handout. The decision, taken after a year's review of the insurer's options, follows the rush by most large building societies, including the Halifax, Woolwich and Alliance & Leicester, to become banks.

As with the building societies, Norwich Union plans to sweeten the deal for policyholders by offering them shares in the company when it floats next year. The insurer refused to give details of its plans, which it intends to unveil ahead of a ballot and meeting of members next Spring. However, the flotation will involve giving policyholders a parcel of shares each and raising extra capital from the stock market.

Experts believe the company will be worth between £4bn and £4.5bn, with members receiving about £2bn in shares. Norwich Union said last week that it intends to give each policyholder a basic allocation of shares, with an extra amount depending on the scale of a member's savings with the company. Based on estimates of a £2bn payout to policyholders, this would mean a basic allocation about £500 worth of shares each.

Among policyholders qualifying for shares are those with life and term assurance cover, both with-profits and unit-linked policyholders, personal pensions and annuity holders. Qualifying members will be given the right to buy an additional amount of shares at a preferential price. Those not benefiting will be the company's motor, household and other general insurance policyholders, 600,000 health and medical insurance members, unit trust and PEP investors.

Others who will lose out are the 10,000-15,000 members whose policies mature between now and March next year, when voting takes place. The company said last week that those individuals will receive an extra, unspecified bonus to their funds to take this into account. It may be possible for some policyholders to extend the life of their policies until after the vote.

Beale Dobie, which deals in second-hand endowment policies, said the flotation means that anyone considering surrendering their policies should think again. By selling them on the second-hand market, policyholders will retain the right to shares on flotation. Conversely, anyone hoping to buy a traded endowment to gain from the free shares is wasting their money.

Norwich Union's decision to float was not a surprise. Despite its claims of uniqueness, most industry analysts believe its move is likely to be followed by many other mutual insurers.



Sign of the times: Norwich Union's chairman George Paul (left) and group chief executive Allan Bridgewater prepare to publicise their flotation plans
Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

Companies tipped to follow suit, or be taken over by larger banks or already-listed insurers, include Friends Provident, believed to be up for sale at present, Scottish Provident, Scottish Widows, Scottish Amicable and NPI. All have repeatedly stated that they have no intention of abandoning mutualism, as has Standard Life, the largest mutual insurer in Europe. However, observers point to the way that building societies were stressing their commitment to the mutual ideal two or three years ago. Earlier this year, Standard Life admitted that a senior employee had been seconded by the company to examine the implications of demutualising.

Prospective "carpetbaggers" hoping to benefit from any expected flotation or takeover should bear in mind that setting up a pension scheme or taking out life cover is a much longer-term proposition than the simple act of opening a building society account. It costs

money and the potential gain from a shares handout is unlikely to be worth the costs of setting up and then discontinuing a policy.

The greatest irony is that Norwich Union is among a large number of mutual life insurers serving their policyholders better than conventional insurance companies owned by outside shareholders.

An analysis for the *Independent* by John Chapman, a former senior official at the Office of Fair Trading, shows that at the top of performance league tables, mutuals outnumber proprietary companies by a wide margin. They also represent a minority of insurers at the bottom, where many of the poor performers are proprietary companies.

The excellent performance of mutuals raises fundamental questions about whose interests are being served by the trend towards abandoning this long established form of ownership.

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money

The house that we built

A couple in the negative equity trap dug their way out with a build-it-yourself cottage. Karen Fardell found out how it was done

More than 500,000 homeowners in Britain are tied to their existing home by the spectre of negative equity. Despite the past year's housing market recovery, for many it will take at least another 12 months of rising prices before their homes are worth more than the mortgages they owe on them, according to experts.

A minority, including those who bought starter homes or some types of council property in the late 1980s, are unlikely to see an end to their problems even then. Others will manage to dig their way out – literally.

Two years ago, Markus and Maxine Lehnert were also stuck in the negative equity trap. Today, they have not only escaped but made themselves a healthy £20,000 profit in the process.

In August 1994, Markus was offered a new position at a hotel in Kent. The commuting would have created too much of a strain, which meant the couple had to move from Luton to Kent. The problem was their home in Luton had been valued at £10,000 less than their existing mortgage. The solution came with their decision to self-build.

"Having read a copy of *Build It* magazine a few years ago, I knew that there were great savings to be made," explains Markus. Every year around 25,000 couples opt to design and build their own home and through careful planning and budgeting, some self-builders save around 20-30 per cent on the cost of buying a similar property. Markus and Maxine were no exception.

The couple began their search for land in mid-September 1994 and finally found a suitable plot through General Accident Land and Property Services. There were two adjoining plots for sale which were on the market for £50,000 each. However, since one plot was slightly smaller than the other, Markus managed to negotiate a 20 per cent discount.

"I had been on a self-build seminar back in 1993 so I had a fair grounding on how to budget for the build," he says.

The Lehnerts then approached Potton, a firm of self-build specialists, and with the help of the company's architect, modified the floor plans of their new home to suit their individual needs.

Markus copied the floor plans for their new home and distributed them with a covering letter to over 150 contractors in the area. Two or three years ago, barely a dozen lenders were prepared to consider mortgages for self-builders. Today, up to 25, including some of the biggest banks and building societies, have special schemes for self-builders, while a dozen others will consider applications on an individual basis.

All lenders will pay out the mortgage, charged at the same variable rate, in stages depending on progress achieved in building the home. About half the lenders will, however, not make loans to purchase the land itself, often a big expense.

Armed with the best quotes from contractors, the kit price for their cottage and the land costs, the Lehnerts took the plans to the Bradford & Bingley Building Society. The society offered a mortgage on 75 per cent of the value of the finished property, provided they were able to rent out their existing home in Luton and provide an income to cover their current mortgage. This would cover the total build costs, budgeted at £90,000 and provide the couple with the means to build a house expected to sell for £120,000. Thus, their £10,000 negative equity was covered, leaving another £20,000 profit should the Lehnerts ever decide to sell.

Once the finances were agreed and planning permission was granted, the couple started building in March 1995. Markus and Maxine managed the entire project, bringing in contracted labour for each stage. Neither had any previous DIY experience but with good research and planning they completed the build within four months.

"The key is with good suppliers and contractors who have the machinery to do the job so you don't have to waste

money hiring equipment. You then need to make sure you have a good solicitor who can help with the fine print, and finally a good rapport with the building authorities since they have the final jurisdiction over what you can and can't build," advises Markus.

By project managing the build and developing a good relationship with their local builders' merchants, the Lehnerts saved themselves around £30,000 on labour costs and several hundred pounds on materials.

Markus and Maxine moved into their new home in June 1995 with no power or services connected to the property. They carried out all the wiring in the property so that by October the house was habitable.

Camping for four months was not ideal, and normally it wouldn't have been necessary except that we needed to save every penny possible," Markus says. "At the time we were renting a property in Kent whilst overseeing the build and so as soon as we had a roof over our heads we moved out to save ourselves the additional expense."

"Before we started the build, I had no DIY experience at all but I found that as the work progressed, I did more and more myself. Wiring up the building was just common sense and in a way, easier for me to do since I knew where all the appliances were going to go."

For a year, the Lehnerts were totally committed to building their dream home but agree that the whole experience has been extremely satisfying, especially since their completed property has been valued at £120,000 as expected. They have sold their three-bedroomed semi in Luton and are now proud owners of a Tudor style cottage with four bedrooms and three reception rooms in the heart of rural Kent.

To book a place on a Potton Self-Build seminar, call 01767 260348. Self-build mortgage details are in *Moneyfacts*, a monthly specialist guide to the best rates.



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Prolific is launching a combination growth PEP investing in both the UK market and the Far East. Initial charges are 3 per cent, on minimum investment of £2,000. Call 0345 886666.

National Counties Building Society is offering a new 90-day postal account, offering 4.25 per cent on savings of £5,000 and a top rate of 6.5 per cent gross on investments above £50,000. Call 01372 742211.

Lloyds Bank is launching a job counselling service, Jobcare, to holders of its card protection insurance scheme, giving telephone advice on CV writing and job interview techniques. Details from Lloyds branches.

Yorkshire Building Society is offering a three-year stepped rate investment bond starting at 6.5 per cent gross and rising to 8.25 per cent in year three. Call 0800 378836. Skipton's two-year Step-Up Bond increases every six months from 5.75 per cent to 7 per cent. Call 0800 603010.

Framlington is launching a monthly income PEP with 3 per cent initial and 1 per cent annual charges. Minimum investment is £3,000. Call 0345 775511.

Leeds & Holbeck Building Society is offering 10-year fixed rate mortgages, pegged at 8.49 per cent on loan-to-value of 90 per cent. Call 0113225 7777.

Chartwell Investment Management is offering a free Guaranteed Product Guide, which examines "guaranteed" investments. Call 01225 446556.

Flemings is waiving its usual 1.5 per cent initial charge on PEP investments made in October. Charges now payable are 1 per cent dealing costs and 0.5 per cent stamp duty. The annual rate is £25 plus VAT. Call 0500 500161.

Help the Aged is launching a guaranteed home repair service with a 24-hour cover. Policyholders face no call-out fee and no on-the-spot payment. Call 0500 515542.

TSB is launching a five-year guaranteed stock market bond which locks in gains made on the FTSE 100 share index 25 per cent above the investment date level. Capital is guaranteed back if the market falls. Call 0500 758444.

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Bristol & West BS	0800 901109	Instant Access Postal	Postal	£10,000	5.85	Year
Bristol & West BS	0800 901109	Instant Access Postal	Postal	£25,000	6.05	Year
Chelsea BS	0800 132351	POST-Inl 20 day	20 day P	£5600	6.05	Year
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National Counties BS	01372 747771	Direct 90	90 day	£20,000	6.30	Year
Greenwich BS	0181 8588212	One Year Term Share	1 Year	£2,500	6.50	Year
Neimwort Benson	01202 502404	HICA	Instant	£2,500	5.00	Month

Halifax BS	01422 339333	Asset Reserve	Instant	£10,000	4.00	Quarter
Chelsea BS	0800 717515	Classic Postal	Instant	£10,000	4.35	Year
Chelsea BS	0800 717515	Classic Postal	Instant	£25,000	4.65	Year
Yorkshire BS	0800 378336	Fixed Rate Bond	31/3/98	£5,000	6.00	Maturity
Northern Rock BS	0500 505005	Postal Deposit Bond	31/12/98	£2,500	6.75	Year
Cowenby BS	0345 665522	Fixed Rate Bond	30/11/99	£1,000	7.30	Year
Slipston BS	0800 603010	Fixed Rate Bond	31/10/01	£5,000	7.50	Year
Sun Banking Corp	01438 744505	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£8,575	7.50	Year
MidWest Bank	0800 200400	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£5,000	7.45	Year
Northamptonshire	0645 720221		5 years	£1,000	7.00	Year

Principality BS	01222 344188	5 years	£500	6.80	Year
Sun Banking Corp	01438 744505	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£9,000	7.50% Year
WestBank Bank	0800 200400	Fixed Rate TESSA	5 years	£5,000	7.45% Year
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Newcastle Bank, Gibraltar	00 350 76158	Nova Access	Instant	£25,000	6.30 Year
Derbyshire Rock Ltd	01481 714600	Offshore 30	30 day	£25,000	6.35 Year
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Derbyshire Rock, Gwern	01481 714600	Millennium Bond	1/100	£10,000	7.50% Year
INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS (overseas)					
Investment Accounts		1 month	£20	4.75	Year

			\$50	5.25	Year
			\$25,000	5.50	Year
Income Bonds		3 months	\$2,000	6.00	Month
			\$25,000	6.25	Month
Capital Bond	Series J	5 years	\$100	6.65F	Maturity
First Option Bonds		12 months	\$1,000	6.00F	Year
			\$20,000	6.25F	Year
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Aggrieved former partners are increasingly prepared to put up a challenge. Ian Hunter explains how the law works

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A recent legal ruling that a live-in lover was not entitled to a share of her deceased partner's pension would seem to underline the vulnerability of dependants who are not expressly provided for in a will.

The reality, however, is that the time-honoured threat to cut an errant relative out of the will is not as potent as it once was. Moreover, changes - both in law and public attitudes - mean the situation is no longer as cut and dried as it once was.

One significant change is that we all appear to be more litigious than before. Exeter-based solicitor Huw Davey, a partner with Anstey Sargent & Probert, says that in his experience in recent years, the numbers prepared to challenge the terms of a will have been on the increase.

Mr Davey believes there are several reasons for this change. "First, potential claimants are better informed of their rights. Often financial advisers are able to offer guidance. Secondly, the recession has played its part, convincing some of the need to pursue a claim where in other circumstances they would be reluctant."

Perhaps even more significantly, a change in the law relating to deaths after 1 January this year is likely to lead to a further increase in claims. Section 2 of the Law Reform (Succession) Act 1995 now allows a common-law husband or wife, who lived with the deceased for two years prior to the date of death, to make a claim on the estate. Prior to the change, this category of claimants would only be eligible if they could show they were "maintained" immediately prior to the date of death.

The division of the deceased's estate is usually either governed by the terms of a properly executed will or, in the absence of a will, the rules governing intestacy. Intestacy rules set out the pecking order, governing the deceased's relatives' entitlement in descending order, depending on the extent of the blood connection.

However, the law recognises, in the form of the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependents) Act 1975, that a will or the intestacy rules may not adequately provide for everyone.

In particular, someone may be close to the deceased but not a relative. A typical situation is where the deceased re-marries late in life and bequeaths everything to his or her new partner, often leaving the children empty-handed and aggrieved.

Save in the case of common-law husbands and wives, claimants must be able to show that they have been maintained by the deceased immediately prior to death.

The law is precise and, to some observers at least, can seem both arbitrary and cruel. If a claimant has been supported by the deceased for a long period of time and then there is a



Where there's a will, there's an argument, especially in old film comedies. Photograph: Ronald Grant Archive

gap shortly before death this will totally frustrate a claim.

Maintenance, which must be financial, can take a variety of forms including the payment of rent or mortgage. It will not usually stretch to caring for an ill partner. If claimants can establish that they have been maintained, a court must then consider whether sufficient provision has already been made for them.

Should sufficient provision not have been made, the court must then consider whether it should exercise its powers and if so what provision it should order from the deceased's estate.

Mr Davey advises parties to attempt, at least

initially, to settle matters amicably short of action. He comments: "Preparing a case for hearing can be costly and time consuming. It will delay the distribution of the estate if the court takes the view that the claimants have a legitimate claim. Those who believe they have a justifiable claim should act quickly as a claim has to be made, in normal circumstances, within six months of the grant of probate or letters of administration."

If all else fails, legal action may still be needed. But if the alternative to a long-term family rift is that a formerly loved dependant is left with nothing, the choice really is no choice at all.

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The big picture

Mr Saturday Night
Sun 10pm C4

There's more to Billy Crystal than the wide-cracking grin of the Oscars. As films like *When Harry Met Sally* and *Throw Momma from the Train* have demonstrated, he is also a considerable comic actor. He shows this most tellingly in *Mr Saturday Night*, which he also directed. Opening "Kings of Comedy", a season of films celebrating comedy actors, this well-observed drama stars Crystal as a New York Jewish stand-up called Buddy Young Jr, who reflects on the family sacrifices he has made to get to the top.

Boy George has as good an explanation as any for the desire to become famous. It's simply a desire to be loved, he says. Lynne Perrie, formerly Ivy Tilsley of *Coronation Street*, concurs. In fact, over footage of her making a special guest appearance at a bingo evening, she admits "you can actually have an orgasm" when up on stage. One hopes she means "actually" in the way that people who end up being quoted in *Private Eye* mean "literally" - ie, metaphorically. Anyway, this admission is slyly edited in with bingo callers telling her to "get on with it". Tough love.

We're watching "The Ghost of Ivy Tilsley" (Sat C4), part of a new Channel 4 season, *Fame Factor*, looking at the darker side of celebrity. Other programmes include a film about stalkers, "I'm Your Number One Fan", and one about the missing guitarist of the Manic Street Preachers, Richey Edwards - "The Vanishing of Richey Manic" (Sat C4). Now, like many of the people interviewed here (a mixture of disc jockeys and fans), I hope Edwards is alive and well. This film, however, verges on *Spinal Tap* at times, with its

solemnity and directorial conceits. I hope he is sane enough to have a laugh at it.

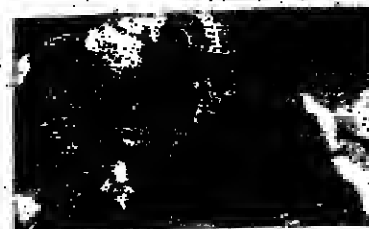
Guy Jenkin's latest political satire concerns the (Tory) Government's majority of one (played with the requisite oleaginousness by Tom Wilkinson), who crosses over to Labour, thus precipitating a general election. It has to be said that *Crossing the Floor* (Sat BBC2) is a lot better than Jenkin's last offering, *The Lord of Misrule*. But its cast of sleazy Tories and sleek New Labour spin-doctors (the baddies here) is so over-familiar that one can only hope for a surprise Lib Dem victory to give us some fresh targets. There's a lovely spoof of a Tory Election Broadcast, by the way, which I suggest Central Office has a look at.

In common with the trend to reduce human experience to chemicals in the brain, *Equinox: Staying Alive* (Sun C4) asks whether disaster survivors have just been damned lucky, or whether said chemicals have kicked in, thus greatly increasing their chances of saving themselves. Instead of freezing up (or, in the case of some of the victims of the Manchester airport disaster in 1985, trying to retrieve their

hand-luggage), they have developed tunnel vision and have literally trodden on other people to get to the escape slides. I suppose there's only one way to discover one's own chemical make-up.

On the subject of survivors, *The South Bank Show* (Sun ITV) features Norman Mailer on his new book, *Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man*. Mailer, posed Hemingway-like against a deep blue seascape, is on good form, despite a worrying tendency to forget words. The contentious gist of the book is that Picasso did all his best work before the age of 30. An interesting postscript is that, like Turner, he obsessively sketched vaginas at the end of his life.

And finally, Clive Anderson, newly signed by the BBC for *Clive Anderson All Talk* (Sun BBC1). My own well-worn view on Anderson is that he is usually so bent on cracking jokes off the back of his guests' answers that they might as well not be there half the time. At his best, though, his quick-fire repartee can jolt celebs out of their PR patter. His first guests - Eddie Murphy and Ben Elton - should be able to give as good as they get.



The big race

Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe
Sun 1.15pm BBC2

He may not be on the Christmas-card list of many bookmakers after last weekend's astonishing seven-race win at Ascot, but jockey Frankie Dettori (above) remains very much the people's champion. Whichever horse he rides, he is sure to be heavily backed by the British daytrippers in the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe at Longchamp this weekend. He will have to beat the early favourite, Heliopsis, and Shaamit, who is attempting to complete the double after winning the Derby earlier this year.

Saturday television and radio

BBC1

- 7.00 Bay City (8060563).
- 7.25 News, Weather (9702259).
- 7.30 Children's BBC: The Morph Files. 7.40 Robinson Sucroe. 8.05 The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest. 8.30 The New Adventures of Superman (R) (2208921).
- 9.15 Live and Kicking. Andrea Boardman talks to Eddie Murphy, while Olympic gold-medal winning swimmer Michelle Smith answers viewers' questions; plus, music from Billy McLean and Sleeper (S) (44191582).
- 12.12 Weather (7639230).
- 12.15 Grandstand: 12.20 Football Focus. 1.00 News. 1.05 Motorcycling: the penultimate round of the British Superbike Championship from Brands Hatch. 1.30 Mountain Biking: highlights of mountain bikers' World Championships from Cairns, Australia. 1.50 Racing from Longchamp: 2.00 Prix de Royalieu. 3.10 Prix du Cadran. 3.45 Prix Dollar. Plus racing from Chepstow. 2.15 Mercedes Benz Handicap Chase. 2.50 Free Handicap Hurdle. 3.25 Maryland Farmhouse Cheddar Novice Chase. 3.55 Football Half-Times. 4.00 Rugby Union: highlights of Italy v Wales from Rome. 4.40 Final Score (S) (95645389).
- 5.20 News, Weather (2776327).
- 5.30 Regional News and Weather (629327).
- 5.35 Dad's Army. Walker arranges for Jones to get some off-rabbit pigeons, but did they come from Trafalgar Square? (R) (620495).
- 6.05 Jim Davidson's Generation Game (S) (985211).
- 7.05 Due South (S) (628834).
- 7.50 The National Lottery Live. Boyzone perform their new single and get the balls rolling (S) (229211).
- 8.05 Casualty. Grief for two young kids travelling from Scotland in search of their mother (S) (623650).
- 8.55 News and Sport, Weather (Followed by National Lottery Update) (346174).
- 9.15 Snowbound. (Christian Duguay 1993 US). A young soldier (Duguy) Howser MD's Neil Patrick Harris) is determined to attend his grandmother's funeral in Idaho, despite a patch of inclement weather. Based on real life is the only thing you can say about this. Kelli Williams, Susan Clark and Michael Gross co-star (580747).
- 10.45 They Think It's All Over. As shown on Thursday. The guests are rugby player Brian Moore and ex-Neighbours star-cum-Big Breakfast presenter, Mark Little (Followed by The Nabors' Favourite Poems) (R) (S) (137124).
- 11.15 Top of the Pops (R) (S) (321150).
- 11.50 The 19th Annual People's Choice Awards. The seventh season in the series was in many ways the best, as Jason heads New York-bound on a cruise ship. Imaginative slasher fare (S) (193619).
- 1.25 Weather (2147612). To 1.30am.
- REGIONS. Wales: 1.50pm Rugby Union: Italy v Wales. Scot: 5.35pm Auntie's TV Favourites NI, Newsline

BBC2

- 8.20 Open University: Immigration, Prejudice and Ethnicity (5460018). 9.10 Seeing Through Mathematics (2648389). 9.35 Tropical Forest: The Conundrum of Co-existence (4659018).
- 10.00 Chantalya. Historical epic (R) (S) (1696360).
- 10.35 Network East (S) (9334563).
- 11.20 Bollywood or Bust! (S) (9332360).
- 11.50 When the Day Comes. Canadian documentary about four women carers (5840940).
- 12.20 Film 96 New York with Barry Norman (3143489).
- 12.50 The Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Victor Fleming 1941 US). Widely considered inferior to the 1932 Fredric March version, the gloss is laid on a bit thick by *Gone with the Wind* director Fleming, without any added depth. With Spencer Tracy, Ingrid Bergman and Lana Turner (84588227).
- 2.45 Tom and Jerry (R) (1728747).
- 2.55 The Nutty Professor (Jerry Lewis 1963 US). Cleverly billed with *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Lewis' finest comedy finds his shy, lovelick chemistry professor becoming singer Buddy Love (Dean Martin) after drinking a special potion. The remake, with Eddie Murphy, hits our cinema screens this autumn (28529360).
- 4.40 The Oprah Winfrey Show (S) (9863582).
- 5.20 TOTP 2 (S) (9439124).
- 6.05 The 19th Annual People's Choice Awards (S) (813196).
- 7.00 News and Sport, Weather (554969).
- 7.15 Correspondent Charles Wheeler meets the "condo commandos" - America's hugely influential elderly voters (S) (640056).
- 8.00 What the Papers Say. With Mark Lawson of the Guardian (S) (829105).
- 8.10 The Hollow State. Continuing his series, Simon Hoggart reflects on the new priorities required by business and government in the new global economy (S) (628105).
- 9.00 Have I Got News for You. Ken Livingstone and Greg Gorman join the lads in yesterday's edition (R) (S) (53048).
- 9.30 Screen Two: Crossing the Floor. See Preview, above (S) (238189).
- 10.45 The 1996 Country Music Awards. The stars of country music gather at Nashville's Grand Ole Opry House for the 30th annual Country Music Association Awards (S) (594940).
- 12.15 Sorority Girl (Roger Corman 1957 US). Low-budget drive-in fodder, with Susan Cabot as the spoilt little rich girl giving her college chums a headache (537709).
- 1.15 Rock All Night (Roger Corman 1957 US). Killers take refuge in a bar and terrorise the customers (8717032). To 2.25am.
- REGIONS. Wales: 4.40pm Correspondent. 5.25 The Time of Your Life. 5.50 Rhodod. 6.45 News and Sport. 6.50 World Cup Football. 9.05 Have I Got News for You. 9.35 Screen Two: Crossing the Floor. 10.50 1996 Country Music Awards. 12.20 Film: Sorority Girl. 1.20 Film: Rock All Night.

ITV/London

- 6.00 GMTV. 6.00 News. 6.10 Mole in the Hole. 6.30 Professor Bubble. 7.10 Disney's Wake Up in the Wild Room. 8.20 Gargoyles. 8.50 Mighty Morphin Power Rangers (777888).
- 9.25 The live entertainment show for Saturdays with Simon Courtie and Sophie Aldred. Gary Glitter and Leslie Grantham guest (22790871).
- 11.00 The Noise. Andi Peters presents the live music magazine. This week's studio guests are Ant and Dec, Toni Braxton and the Spice Girls (S) (2698).
- 11.30 The Chart Show (S) (35940).
- 12.30 Love Bites. New series looking at romance, relationships and love. In the first edition, footballing hardman Vinnie Jones is asked whether he believes in true love, and there's a report on what it would be like to get pregnant at the age of 14 (29259).
- 1.00 News and Weather (48207389).
- 1.05 Local News, Weather (48299360).
- 1.10 Movies, Games and Videos (6383921).
- 1.45 Cartoon Time (57532766).
- 2.00 Rising Damp (Joe McGrath 1979 UK). Sitcom spin-off with Leonard Rossiter, Frances O'Leary and Don Warrington (675259).
- 3.50 Sequest 2032 (S) (8230327).
- 4.45 News, Sports Results, Weather (7943853).
- 5.05 London Tonight, Sport (Followed by LWT Weather) (5954853).
- 5.20 New Baywatch. Mitch has to judge a bikini contest, the old dog (S) (4356143).
- 6.15 Gladiators (S) (827495).
- 7.15 Blind Date (S) (823679).
- 8.15 Family Fortunes (S) (143785).
- 8.45 News, Weather, Lottery Result (Followed by LWT Weather) (641786).
- 9.00 Die Hard 2 (Renny Harlin 1990 US). The sequel to John McTiernan's action classic recognises the parodic value of Bruce Willis's New York cop stumbling into a terrorist spectacular for the second time - this time, they've seized Washington's Dulles Airport. Bonnie Bedelia again plays his wife - again one of the hostages. Dennis Franz co-stars (S) (26914308).
- 11.15 Magnum Force (Ted Post 1973 US). A Nazi-style elite of clean-cut cops are slaughtering San Francisco's urban racketeers, drug dealers and other scum. You'd have thought the hero of *Dirty Harry* would have approved. Instead, in this brutally effective entertainment (the script was from John Mills), Clint Eastwood's avenger hero decides to round them up. A pre-stardom David Soul supports (53309501).
- 1.30 Funny Business. David Baddiel is one of Jo Jo Whildent's guests (S) (7950148).
- 2.00 The Chart Show (R) (S) (4816051).
- 2.50 El News Review (6002235).
- 3.40 Cool Vibes (S) (15616709).
- 4.35 The Gift (R) (4256254).
- 5.30 News (552351). To 6.00am.

Channel 4

- 6.50 The Magic School Bus (R) (S) (6874563).
- 7.25 Really Wild Animals. A new wildlife series, narrated by Oudry Moore (S) (3901143).
- 7.45 First Edition (8852230).
- 8.00 Transworld Sport (30209).
- 9.00 The Morning Line. Today's nags (S) (91650).
- 10.00 Gazzetta Football Italia (97540).
- 11.00 Blitz! (S) (89476).
- 12.00 Rawhide (19768).
- 1.00 Sea Devils (Raoul Walsh 1953 UK). Low-budget "programmer" set in the Napoleonic wars (and filmed around the Channel Islands) tells of a group of smugglers who discover French invasion plans (20485563).
- 2.40 Channel 4 Racing from Newmarket. Brough Scott introduces the four-race card: the 2.55 Sun Chariot Stakes, the 3.35 Tote Cambridgeshire Handicap, the 4.10 Jockey Club Cup, and the 4.45 Alington Maiden Fillies Stakes (S) (7064376).
- 5.05 Brookside Omnibus (R) (S) (3550105).
- 6.30 Night to Reply (S) (308).
- 7.00 News Summary and Weather (990747).
- 7.05 The People's Parliament. Same-sex partners should be allowed to marry and enjoy the same legal rights as heterosexual couples. Discuss (260834).
- 8.00 Fame Factor: The Ghost of Ivy Tilsley. A new Channel 4 "zone", looking at the darker side of fame, begins with actress Lynne Perrie, aka *Coronation Street*'s Ivy Tilsley. See Preview, above (S) (3719).
- 8.30 Roseanne (R) (S) (9766).
- 9.00 The Your Number One Fan. Professor Paul Mullen, who has specialised in incidents of star stalking, explains how fandom can slip into obsession and, in some cases, life-threatening behaviour (8747).
- 10.00 The Vanishing of Richey Manic. On 14 February last year, Richey Edwards, of the Manic Street Preachers, went missing, and he hasn't been heard of or from since. A stunt, a cry for help, or did Edwards throw himself from the Severn Bridge? A range of celebs and fans have their say. See Preview, above (90259).
- 10.30 I'm a Star (Frank Pierson 1976 US). Barbra Streisand is a small-town singer discovered by Kris Kristofferson, a rock star past his prime. They marry, but her star rises and his falls. Effective, if sentimental, variation on the *Iris*-framed story (14497389).
- 1.05 Reflected Glory. Film about "tribute bands", such as the Bootleg Beatles and The Beatles (S) (171209).
- 1.20 Blast 'Em. Repeat True Stories film about the worst paparazzo photographer (R) (S) (171207).
- 2.50 Blow Up (Michelangelo Antonioni 1966 UK). Seminal slice of swinging London with photographer David Hammons, whose lark fashion shoot in the park may or may not have captured a murder (5144931). To 4.50am.

ITV/Regions

- ANGLIA
As London except: 12.30pm *Champion of the Future* (29259). 1.10 *Reach* (267230). 1.40 *Movies, Games and Videos* (143785). 2.10 *Saturday Night Takeaway* (229211). 2.55 *Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway* (229211). 3.30 *Cartoon Network* (317909). 2.25am *Film: The Man in the Wilderness* (235728). 4.10am *Heller Sheller* (9551438). 5.00-5.30am *World of Soul* (601254).
- CHANNEL 3 NORTH EAST/YORKSHIRE
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (143785). 1.10 *Thunder in Paradise* (510178). 2.05 *Cartoon Time* (187481). 2.15 *Film: Gary on Stage* (282171). 2.45 *Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway* (229211). 3.30 *Cartoon Network* (317909). 2.25am *Film: The Man in the Wilderness* (235728). 4.10am *Heller Sheller* (9551438). 5.00-5.30am *World of Soul* (601254).
- CENTRAL
As London except: 12.30pm *Premiere* (29259). 1.10 *Cartoon Time* (187481). 1.25 *Dinosaurs* (3087745). 1.35 *Cartoon Network* (317909). 2.25 *Movies, Games and Videos* (143785). 2.45 *Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway* (229211). 3.30 *Cartoon Network* (317909). 2.25am *Film: The Man in the Wilderness* (235728). 4.10am *Heller Sheller* (9551438). 5.00-5.30am *World of Soul* (601254).
- ITV
As London except: 12.30pm *West Coast* (907969). 12.45 *Movies, Games and Videos* (143785). 1.10 *West Coast* (907969). 1.25 *Cartoon Network* (317909). 2.25 *Movies, Games and Videos* (143785). 2.45 *Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway* (229211). 3.30 *Cartoon Network* (317909). 2.25am *Film: The Man in the Wilderness* (235728). 4.10am *Heller Sheller* (9551438). 5.00-5.30am *World of Soul* (601254).
- MERIDIAN
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (143785). 1.10 *Movies, Games and Videos* (143785). 1.40 *World of Wonders* (143785). 2.05 *Film: The Life of a Lion* (436360). 3.30am *Cartoon Network* (317909). 2.25am *Film: The Man in the Wilderness* (235728). 4.10am *Heller Sheller* (9551438). 5.00-5.30am *World of Soul* (601254).
- WESTCOUNTRY
As London except: 12.30pm *Movies, Games and Videos* (143785). 1.10 *Cartoon Network* (317909). 2.25 *Movies, Games and Videos* (143785). 2.45 *Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway* (229211). 3.30 *Cartoon Network* (317909). 2.25am *Film: The Man in the Wilderness* (235728). 4.10am *Heller Sheller* (9551438). 5.00-5.30am *World of Soul* (601254).
- S4
As London except: 10.00am *Rawhide* (19768). 12.00 *The Avengers* (19768). 2.45 *Cartoon Network* (317909). 3.30 *Cartoon Network* (317909). 2.25am *Film: The Man in the Wilderness* (235728). 4.10am *Heller Sheller* (9551438). 5.00-5.30am *World of Soul* (601254).

Radio

Radio 1

- 9.59am BBC News
- 10.00am Kevin Greening 10.00
- 10.05am Dave Pearce 1.00 John Whitley 4.00
- 10.10am John Peel 7.00 Lowgrove Dance Party with Danny Rampling 9.00
- 10.15am Rap Show 12.00 The Radio 1 Reggae Showcase 1.00
- 10.15am Essential Mix Judge Jules
- 4.00-6.00am Charlie Jordan

Radio 2

- 6.00am Mo Dutta 8.05 Brian Matthews 10.00 Steve Wright's Saturday Show 1.00 Carrot's Comedy Choice 1.30 The News Huddlines 2.00 Judi Fries 4.00 Nick Barracough 5.00 Bob Blegum June 6.00 Chris Fries in Concert 7.00 Kiss Me Kate 10.00 The Birmingham Repertory Theatre 12.05 Sue McGarry 4.00-6.00am Mo Dutta

Radio 3

- 6.00-7.00am BBC News
- 7.00am Record Review
- 9.00 Building a Library
- 10.15 Record Release
- 12.00 Private Passions. Michael Berkeley is joined by poet Craig Raine, whose musical passions include Mahler, Tchaikovsky, Musorgsky and Stravinsky, Carmen Jones, or Hook and The Medicine Show.
- 1.00 News: Simon Rattle - Home and Away. Sir Simon Rattle and his wife, Jane, talk about his private life, his new opera, broadcast live from the New Theatre, Cardiff.
- 3.00 The Department Score. 3.30 Youth Orchestras of the World.
- 5.00 Jazz: Record Requests. With Geoffrey Smith.
- 5.45 Music Matters. Ivan Hewett reads a new book on the value of popular music, and offers an appraisal of Bruce Springsteen 100 years after his death.
- 6.30 Debut. A recital by the young Russian pianist Konstantin Sherkov, winner of the first Rostropovich Competition in Moscow.
- 7.10 The Doctor of Myddyl. Peter Maxwell Davies's new opera, broadcast live from the New Theatre, Cardiff.
- 9.35 Building for the Arts. Light in Dark Places. John Drummond talks to leading architects about the recent transformation of art galleries.
- 10.05 Phil Woods and Clark Terry. Geoffrey Smith introduces two concert given in the Wigmore Hall, London.

Choice

Lots of Oscar Wilde (left) around this weekend to mark the centenary of the disastrous libel suit that led to his downfall, including a pair of dramas starring Simon Russell Beale: *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* (2.30pm and 10.15pm R4).



Radio 4

- 12.44am BBC News
- 6.00am News Briefing
- 6.10am News Today
- 6.50 Prayer for the Day
- 6.55 Weather
- 7.00 News
- 7.05 Sport on 4
- 9.30 Breakfast
- 10.00 News: Loose Ends. Tears and laughter as Ned Sherrin talks to John Motson, Michael Foot at 11.
- 11.00 News: Agenda. Crime and Punishment. While both major parties make a point of talking tough on crime, many people doubt whether the politicians will deliver. Peter Hitchens examines the limits of the new law-and-order consensus.
- 11.30 From Our Own Correspondents. Reports from BBC correspondents around the world.
- 12.00 Money Box
- 12.25 News Quiz
- 12.55 Weather
- 1.00 News
- 1.10 Any Questions?
- 1.55 Shipping Forecast
- 2.00 News: Any Answers?
- 2.30 Saturday Playhouse: The Trials of Oscar Wilde. By Christopher Fitz-Simon. With the Marquis of Queensberry hounding him for corrupting his son, Wilde can either remain silent or risk having his private life dragged through the courts. (1.2). See Choice, above.
- 4.00 News: That's History. 4.30 Science Now. Are present-day mental problems related to the evolution of humankind? Peter Evans examines the new area of evolutionary psychology, which is challenging

Radio 5

- 5.00 File on 4. Jonathan Rugman reports on major issues at home and abroad.
- 5.40 The Warehouse. A mix of anecdote, archive sound and music provides a sliding look at the contents of an average wardrobe.
- 5.50 Shipping Forecast
- 5.55 Weather
- 6.00 5.00 O'clock News
- 6.25 Week Ending. Topical comedy sketch show with Sally Gargan, Peter Serafinowicz, Meera Syal and Alistair McGowan.
- 6.50 Ad Lib. Robert Robinson talks with a group of portrait painters and discovers that the artist's studio is a place where the great and good, the rich and famous, and even crowned heads can relax and tell stories. (1.8).
- 7.20 Kaleidoscope Features. Tim Mayton visits Luton and the West Country to report on the state of the British rave scene in the wake of the Criminal Justice Bill. Is it a radical movement with important social and political implications, or simply a vacuous pursuit of love-up teenagers?
- 7.50 On These Days
- 8.50 Saturday Night Theatre: Victoria Station. Historical drama by Steve Chambers set in Victoria Station, Bridford. 11 January 1895 is a day notable for infectious protest and protesting infection. (2.5).
- 9.35 Classics with Kay
- 9.50 Ten to Ten
- 9.59 Weather
- 10.00 News
- 10.15 The Trials of Oscar Wilde. By Christopher Fitz-Simon. The trial commences and Wilde starts our confidently in front of a packed court room. (2.2). See Choice, above.
- 11.15 Auntie's Secret Box. The radio archives explored with

Radio 5

- 6.00am Brian Hayes at Breakfast 9.05 Weekend with Kershaw and Whitaker
- 11.05 Top Gear 11.35 Sick as a Parrot (9374872). 12.00 Film: Pretty Poison (2275506). 2.00-6.00am Hit Mix Long Play (6263902).

Classic FM

- 6.00am Sarah Lucas. 9.00 Classic Countdown. 12.00 Gardening Forum. 1.00 Jane Marchant. 3.00 Nick Bailey. 7.00 Russian Revelation. 8.00 Evening Concert. Elgar: Wand of Youth Suite No. 2. Dukas: The Sorcerer's Apprentice. Prokofiev: Cinderella Suite No. 1. Ravel: L'enfant et les Sortilèges. 10.00 Classic Quiz. 12.00 Andre Leac. 4.00 Travel Guide. 5.00-6.00am Michael Farstone.

Virgin Radio

- 12.15-12.30am WY 105 Radio
- 6.00am John Hopper 8.00am Russ & Jon's Greatest Hits 10.00 Richard Skinner 2.00 Robin Banks (including Cadbury's Churchill Album Chart) 6.00am Lynn Parsons 6.00am Jeremy Clark 2.00-6.00am Howard Pearce

World Service

- 1.00am Newsdesk 1.30 Letter from America 1.45 Britain Today 2.00 Newsdesk 2.30 People and Politics 3.00 Newsday 3.30 Music Review 4.00 World News 4.15 Sports Roundup 4.30 Fourth Estate 4.45 Write On 4.55 Pop Short 5.00 Newsdesk 5.30-6.00am Short Story

Satellite

SKY 1

- 7.00am Undun (5102553). 12.00 WWF (59414). 1.00 Hit Mix (55834). 2.00 Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (74881). 3.00 Hawkeye (65501). 4.00 WWF (51308). 5.00 Pacific Blue (1366). 6.00 America's Dumbest Criminals (76791). 6.30 Springfield (12581). 7.00 Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (99869). 8.00 Unsolved Mysteries (72389). 9.00 Cops (40292). 9.30 Cops Files (50143). 10.00 Stand and Deliver (1994). 10.30 Revelations (29781). 11.00 Movie Show (52037). 11.30 Forever Knight (82105). 12.30 Dream On (81185). 1.00 Comedy Rules (87544). 1.10 The Edge (84322). 2.00-7.00am Hit Mix (65525).

SKY 2

- 7.00pm Earth 2 (4449143). 8.00 Jag (442553). 9.00 Kidnapped: The Embarrassing (4445327). 10.00 Tales from the Crypt (5430699). 10.30 Tales from the Crypt (9374872). 12.00 Film: Pretty Poison (2275506). 2.00-6.00am Hit Mix Long Play (6263902).

SKY MOVIES

- 6.00am The Double Man (1967) (58124). 8.00 A Flea in Her Ear (1968) (20501). 10.00 Destination Moon (1950) (41789). 12.00 Winchester (1980) (10134). 2.00 Manhattan Murder Mystery (1993) (79292). 4.00 Homebound Bound (1980) (8292). 6.00 Sleepless in Seattle (1993) (69056). 8.00 Top Gun (1986) (45011). 10.00 Philadelphia (1993) (60009018). 12.05 Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom (1984) (75280). 1.40 Hostile Advances: The Kerry Ellison Story (1996) (2871902). 3.10-6.00am Where the Day Takes You (1992) (3592383).

MOVIE CHANNEL

- 6.00am Hollywood Cavalcade (1939) (56786). 8.00 Believer (1993) (38149). 10.00 Romantic Undertaking (1995) (48077). 12.00 With Honor (1994) (18766). 2.00 Night in Casablanca (1946) (77834). 4.00 Andie (1994) (9834). 6.00 Black Beauty (1994) (9834). 8.00 When Honor (1994) (92143). 10.00 Exit to Eden (1994) (20725). 11.55 Last Gap (1994) (658414). 1.30 The Joy Luck Club (1993) (3987273). 3.50-6.00am Rosie O'Donnell Movie (1978) (29743273).

UK GOLD

- 7.00am Give Us A Cue (726

There is a future for a new model monarchy

Vive la république! How natural a conclusion that would be after a week of stargazing Vasso on Fergie and (a very different book, to be sure) Ben Pimlott in these pages on the Queen. "Dregs of a dull race" - Shelley's judgement on the Hanoverians - needs to be updated for the Battenberg-Windsors and their circle. Even after due weight is given to media preoccupations, and fact peeled apart from the "as-told-to" and "a courtier said", how little there is in all these tales to inspire love and esteem for our monarchical institutions. How easy it might be to let disillusion consume the institution of the British monarchy.

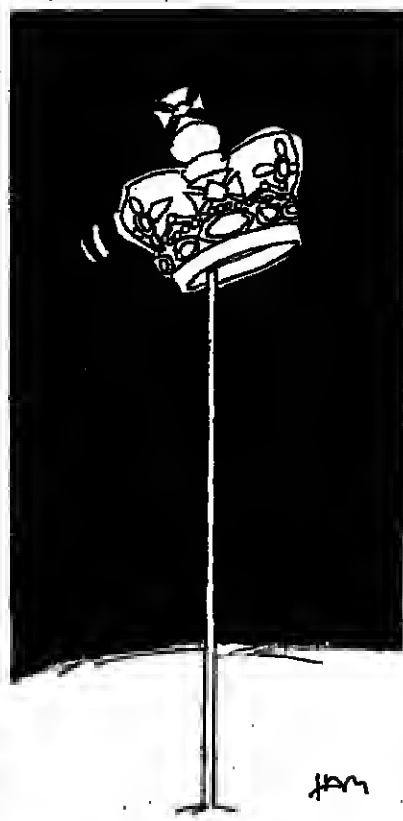
Even Cromwell, though, knew that one way or another he would have to re-create a working relationship between executive authority, titular headship of the state, and the legislature. Inside that constitutional triangle lies the continuing justification for the monarchy. The House of Windsor may be in questionable condition, but that in itself is insufficient cause for conducting major surgery. Why? Because the other components in the constitutional matrix require more urgent and more substantial reform than the monarchy. Indeed, there is a strong case for feeling that, while the storm of reform quite properly blows about the Lords, the Commons, Scotland, Ireland, electoral reform and our relationship with Europe, the

monarchy might even serve as a sort of sheath-tancho.

During the next few years there ought to be sharp discussion about how to reform the peerage by, at the least, injecting a representative element into the upper house. This week (Neil Hamilton, election funding, representativeness) has underlined once again the need for profound changes in the method of election to, and the daily conduct of, the House of Commons.

The creation of even a mildly authoritative Scottish parliament will have knock-on effects throughout our constitution, as will any ultimate settlement in Northern Ireland. The position of this country inside the European Union will alter for certain during the next three years; whatever decision is made about our joining the single currency, its mere creation by France, Germany and the German mark neighbours will provoke inevitable revision in the political and administrative relations between Brussels, London, Luxembourg and Strasbourg.

That welter of constitutional change is either necessary, or unstoppable, or both. Why then add pointlessly to it by attempting to invent an alternative for the monarchy? If George IV showed how a king could side with the reactionaries, George V showed how in a moment of constitutional crisis the monarch can smooth reform. The practical



fiction of "the Crown" is and remains useful as a bond for the state's officials, for the legal system, and for the ownership of various kinds of government assets.

It is a commonplace, as true now as it was when Lord Protector Cromwell was offered a throne, that nations need figureheads. To some people the prospect of a British president seems beguiling. But it is hard to see how our progress towards a more modern society would be greatly aided by the creation of a brand new, unknown centre of potentially authoritarian power, in place of a monarchy whose power is partly irrelevant, partly imaginary, and partly rather pragmatically convenient. Stripped down from its imperial pretensions, the monarchy provides a historically valid symbol of unity.

Change, however, should be brought about more in gradualist Fabian fashion than in guillotining revolutionary fashion. Ben Pimlott's narrative leaves the impression that Elizabeth II is not so dyed-in-the-wool that she could not contemplate substantial patching and alteration to the royal purple. Her eldest son has shown himself open to new thinking about the royal future. That phrase, "a king for all faiths", for which he was so much derided, is spot-on. The Anglican Church, a wily survivor if ever there was one, does not need a monarch at its head; if the king or queen of next century Britain were

a Catholic or even a non-believer, so much the better. The monarchy would serve the nation better after disestablishment.

But the nation need not pay so dearly for the privilege. Any chancellor worth his or her salt should demand substantial further reductions in the cost of the Civil List, together with a thorough review of the Queen's personal wealth and of the Duchy of Cornwall. There is even a case for reviving the old medieval slogan that the king should live "of his own" - the proceeds of the royal family's property paying for its institutional existence. That ought, at least, to encourage the Queen or her heir into long overdue pruning of the grace and favour lists and the further appendages of the immediate royal family.

The British monarchy is an institution which history proves to be capable of dramatic internal change. The House of Windsor has not been an especially imaginative dynasty. But there are signs that, for its own sake as much as that of the throne it occupies, fresh thought is taking place about downsizing and disappearing off the front pages of the tabloid newspapers. It would be too much to expect Prince Charles to write a Demos pamphlet on the prospects for modest monarchy. But he could and should stimulate his cleverer friends to start thinking aloud about the dimensions of a new model monarchy.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Whoever wins control, Jerusalem belongs to the world

Sir: Professor Hughes (letter, 2 October) is right to note the 1978 Unesco resolution deploring the Israeli excavations in Jerusalem and the American and British withdrawal from Unesco.

It is a little publicised fact that in 1980/1 the Old City of Jerusalem was nominated, and listed, as a World Heritage Site; such sites, under the terms of the World Heritage Convention, drawn up under the auspices of the same UN agency, are defined as places to be protected for their "universal importance to mankind". The nomination was made by Jordan and accepted by Unesco because the city is of vital cultural importance to the Moslem, Christian and Jewish religions. Israel has never accepted the listing, arguing that it was politically motivated, and that because Israel is the *de facto* authority in the city, Jordan has no legitimate right to make it.

In 1982 the Old City was included on the list of World Heritage Sites in Danger. One of the criteria for inclusion on the list is (to paraphrase) "the serious loss of cultural or historical integrity". The nomination, again by Jordan, came about after the shooting of a number of Palestinians within the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount) and in response to increasing frustration in the Arab world, and international concern at the scale of urban development within and without its walls. Again Israel did not recognise the listing.

The recent opening of the tunnel finally draws attention to many similar actions since 1967. Many of these are illegal under the terms of the Hague Convention.

Eventually, the negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem will decide who will be responsible for its care, and it is time that the parties involved woke up to the fact that whoever is granted that responsibility will be guardians, not owners, of Jerusalem for the millions of Moslems, Christians and Jews around the world. DAVID MYRES London W6



Old Jerusalem yesterday: a Muslim man leaving Friday prayers at the al-Aqsa Mosque Photograph: AP

Sir: Professor Hughes refers to a Unesco resolution in support of his claim that Israeli archaeological excavations in Jerusalem are an attempt to "reinforce sovereignty" in the city. He fails to point out that following the resolution, a Unesco-appointed expert committee headed by Professor Raymond Lemaire, Unesco's representative to Jerusalem, reported in 1983 that allegations linking the excavations with "damage to Muslim structures" were "groundless". SHAYLA WALMSLEY London EC1

Sir: I have read the courageous letter of the Hon Miranda Rothschild with great interest (30 September). I founded the Muslim and Jewish Society in 1964. This was in response to my dream of bringing together these great cultures. The cruelly shattered peace has

consumed all thinking people with grief, harmony was so near but as events proved it was all in vain. We need to convince the people of Israel to seek re-elections which will bring a national and God-fearing administration to power.

As a brother Israeli I seek a solution which will reunite us with our brother Israelis, this securing peace in this critical area. The whole universe is threatened by the partisan and ruthless behaviour of the present Israeli leadership.

We must stand together with all nations, rebuild the Holy Places that have been desecrated and establish goodwill again among nations of the Middle East and the Muslims at large. Prince Mohsin ALI KHAN London N2

Sir: I could see no evidence in the European Union statement on the

latest crisis of an implicit warning that "Israel's economic ties with Europe could be jeopardised by further breaches of the peace deal, particularly over Jerusalem" ("EU puts squeeze on Netanyahu", 2 October).

Europe might yearn for the good old days when Israel was a fledgling state, vulnerable to economic threat, but nowadays Europe's trade with Israel is booming, and very much in Europe's favour. Israel's current annual trade deficit with the EU is \$8.5bn. While the recent EU-Israel trade-association agreement may benefit Israel, it will give European companies access to Israel's hugely innovative science and hi-tech sector. Many people believe that Europe stands to gain far more from the association than does Israel. HELEN DAVIS Britain-Israel Public Affairs Centre London EC1

'Victims' rush to blame someone

Sir: In "Tarred with the brush of blame" (28 September) we read of British smokers jumping on the litigation bandwagon set in motion across the Atlantic.

As a doctor I see daily the havoc wreaked by cigarettes, and I have little sympathy with tobacco companies. I am, however, sick of the victim culture into which we seem to be degenerating. It seems people are not prepared to accept any responsibility for their own lives. Freedoms they want; rights they demand - but responsibility is rejected. Were these poor people forced to smoke?

Where will it end? If my picnic gets rained off should I sue the Met Office? If I slip on an icy pavement should I sue the town council? If I have a traffic accident should I sue the manufacturer of my car? Is it not time we remembered that we are accountable for our own actions, before we automatically look for someone else to blame when things go wrong? HUGH J THOMSON Consultant Surgeon Birmingham

Giving trouble

Sir: Giving to charity must be a rare bargain, judging by the accounts of the beautiful Messrs Gentles and Tye (Letters, 27 September, 1 October). At one time, you just got a warm inner glow for your money. Now, apparently, you're entitled to lecture the beneficiaries of your largesse should they plead, Oliver-like, for more. As a bonus, you can write to the press and tell the entire nation of the churlishness with which your aims have been received. Truly, it is better to give... IVAN SHAKESPEARE London N7

We're no ladies

Sir: To answer Marie Paterson's question (letters, 1 October), the reason women today dislike being called ladies is that we want equality with men. "Lady" is acceptable if the equivalent term for a male in the same context would be "gentleman". To use "lady" out of a sense of respect for a female which would not apply for a male is patronising and insulting. KATE WELCH Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire

Sir: While we're at it let us not forget those council advertisements seeking "dinner ladies" and "women teachers". ROBERT VINCENT Andover, Hampshire

Ambridge tragedy

Sir: The death of Doris Archer in a barn fire ("There's just enough muck in Ambridge", 1 October)? I rather think not. Any Archer fan will tell you that it was Grace Archer (Phil Archer's first wife and hence daughter-in-law of Doris) who died in a barn fire in 1955, famously on the night that commercial television started broadcasting in this country. PETER ANKERS London EC2

Budapest brains

Sir: In the obituary of Professor Sir Geoffrey Wilkinson (1 October) it is stated that Todmorden Secondary School is probably the only school to have educated two Nobel prizewinners. There is at least one other. Two pupils of the Lutheran Gymnasium (grammar school) in Budapest received a Nobel prize: Eugene Wigner (physics, 1963) and John Harsanyi (economics, 1994). ANDREW PETO Bickley, Kent

LETTER from THE EDITOR

"You have to speak in inanities or the media will try to suggest you are criticising. This is terrifying for politics... Running the country is a bit more complicated than that. We need discussion about some of the challenges facing us... I am an old-fashioned politician who believes in reading books, who believes that intelligent discussion creates new ideas and that politics is not just something a few leaders do to run the country." Thus Clare Short on the BBC's *Conference Live* programme from Blackpool.

Stumbling sore-footedly among Labour delegates, and dazed with gossip and lager at the Imperial Hotel, I found this year's conference obsessed with journalism and reportage. It seemed unsettlingly post-modern - the medium arguing about the media and the message sliced into soundbite nuggets. But because the argument directly concerns how *The Independent* acts, as well as other papers, I thought it right to mention it this morning. There were two strands to it - the discussion about whether politics has become dominated by spin doctors, and the argument about what papers report - "spits" based on unnamed sources, rather than the raw meat of policy. The two are clearly related but the spin doctor stuff can be disposed of more quickly. Political journalists who let themselves be bullied by spin doctors are rare and ought to find another trade. Hacks who moan about them are, to adopt the language of the Chancellor, pathetic.

The second problem is more serious. We don't reproduce Labour policy documents, or anyone else's, because they are extremely boring. We do report significant changes of policy. But yes, all papers bang on about splits and use unattributable sources. Where do we get them from? Most politicians I know will leak; and most are furious when they, in turn, are leaked against. But it isn't merely laziness or an irrational distaste for on-the-record quotes, as (say) Tony Benn thinks. Politics now happens inside parties as much as between them: few serious politicians would dispute that. But there is a strong belief

among the same people that parties which seem divided can't win elections. There's no way out.

This leads inexorably to the conclusion that real political argument - such as Labour's attitude to the single European currency - must be worked out behind the scenes.

The Tories used to do this all the time, but are getting worse at it. This week, by contrast, there was almost no public argument at Blackpool - not simply because people had been so desperate to win that they too regard Clare's open discussion as dangerous.

Most politicians believe that real argument must be worked out behind the scenes. Journalism then falls back on unattributable quotes

If that's what the politicians do, then journalism has little recourse but to use unattributable quotes. Is this healthy? No. Does it lead to vigorous, engaging politics? No, it produces cynicism. Who loses from cynicism? All of us, but the cynics most directly. I don't have any easy answers. Come to think of it, I'm a bit short on difficult answers too. Perhaps we should just ban the word spin and stop pretending to be shocked when politicians from the same party disagree. What do readers think?

Other than that, drifting idly around the Blackpool conference for a day without needing to file a story has been one of the nicest perks of editorship thus far. But I am not swollen with hubris, having heard yesterday how Rupert Murdoch lets his editors know that their number is coming up. "Vassall," says the Prince of Darkness after some disagreement. "You're the editor." Apparently the phrase should be translated as "...but not for much longer."

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

There can be only one response to the spin doctor who tries to influence the content of a programme by threatening its editor. It should be succinct and consist of two words - John Humphrys, presenter of the BBC's *Today* programme and *On the Record*

I plead guilty to trying in the past to put a good spin on everything Labour does and I will continue to do so - Peter Mandelson, Labour MP and guru

If people think my brain does not work, only my mouth, then they make a mistake - John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader

People have got to trust politicians. What I say is what I will do - Gordon Brown, Shadow Chancellor

Tony Blair is a problem. Anyone on our side who doesn't think he is, is a fool - Lord Archer, Tory peer and best-selling author

We doubt whether the Labour Party will be able to tolerate the Blair leadership for very much longer - Ken Coates, Labour MEP

Dealing with Margaret Thatcher was like taking alternate hot and cold baths - Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany

I try to make the here and now as heavenly as possible in case there isn't one to ascend into when we're done. It's a kind of insurance - Michael Caine, actor

Women right to fear burglary

Sir: Both Polly Toynbee ("Crime is up! Hit the moral panic button", 25 September) and the letters you printed in response (2 October) miss the point about elderly women's fear of crime.

The biggest factor must now be burglary. Most people have seen either their own homes burgled or the homes of people they care about. Their fear of crime is no longer based on news stories. It is based on their real personal experience.

Young women, as well as old, seem to fear the intrusion of burglary more than men. There is no comfort from the police, who can only tell them that there is small chance of the burglar being caught, that no preventive measures will stop burglars getting in if they really want to and that their having been burgled once makes it more likely, not less, that they will be burgled again. For elderly women living alone the greatest fear is that, next time, they might be at home when the burglars call.

Most of the elderly women I work with face these realities with some resilience, but few are wholly unscathed by the experience. Some part of their life is really spoiled.

The Rev MATTHEW BAYNHAM Vicar St Luke's Church Cradley Heath, West Midlands

South Downs need special care

Sir: Your article on the future administration of the South Downs ("Salvation in prospect for Kipling's dream Downs", 19 September) states there is "widespread opposition" to declaring the area a national park.

Recent consultation has revealed that support for a national park or statutory body of similar status is also "widespread" - the National Trust, English Nature, Sports Council, Rural Development Commission, Ramblers Association, Open Spaces Society and Council for the Protection of Rural England, to name a few.

The South Downs is one of England's most beautiful landscapes. Yet it faces serious pressures - from the expansion of the Sussex coastal towns, road building and commercial and tourist developments. In CPRE's view the Countryside Commission's proposals to continue

with current administrative arrangements are not sufficiently secure. While the existing Conservation Board has without question provided good value for money in planning and management of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, it needs both statutory authority and the resources to plan, manage and protect the whole of the Downs.

A special statutory body, equivalent in status to a National Park, tailored to the local area, is needed. The Countryside Commission should give greater consideration to this option if the South Downs is to continue to inspire poets of this and future generations. FIONA REYNOLDS Director Council for the Protection of Rural England London SW1

Cash for questions: cut out the middle man and cut out the sleaze

Sir: Imagine if government departments offered, on a commercial basis, facilities equivalent to written parliamentary questions, direct to professional lobbyists.

Imagine also if they could recover costs from lobbyists where it emerged that they had placed questions through MPs.

We would then have an end to

cash-for-questions scandals, while harming no legitimate interests. The public purse would profit and some MPs might have more time for their real constituents. PHILIP FAWAN Middlesbrough, Cleveland

Sir: The recent Greer/Hamilton affair has confirmed my fears that the

House of Commons is not a legislative assembly that most British people can be proud of. I would be keen to hear the Prime Minister "understand less and condemn more" the behaviour of Members of Parliament who bring it into such disrepute. So far the silence has been deafening. JOHN CARTER Bristol

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL (Fax 0171-293 2056; e-mail letters@independent.co.uk) and include a daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

queen & country

part three: polishing their image

In the final extract from his new biography, Ben Pimlott traces the relationship between the media and the Queen from postwar deference to today's free-for-all. It was the Royal Family who first invited in the cameras



tant part in establishing the idea of a "royal problem" in the minds of a middle-class readership. The tone was not cheeky, as in the tabloids, but admonishing. Soon it was being pointed out that royal tax immunity was not an historic right but, on the contrary, had only been acquired in the 20th century. Taxing the Queen at 40 per cent would yield more than £200m a year, "enough for a dozen hospitals". The *Sun* suggested gleefully. Before long even a staunch royalist such as Lord St John of Fawsley was conceding that the exemption had become hard to defend. In November 1992 - the *annus horribilis* - the Prime Minister announced that the Queen would begin to pay tax on her private income from the following year.

However, the cheekiness of the tabloid, and quality, press did not diminish. Calls for a slimmed-down monarchy became widespread, and the Queen, who had no critics who dared to reveal themselves early in her reign, now seemed to have few defenders among journalists and politicians. Though party leaders and other prominent members of the Establishment avoided joining in the chorus of detractors, few chose to give the existing system an open endorsement.

The republican movement had crept up on Australia in the Eighties in a way that served as a warning to the monarchy not to take the popular support at home, at any particular moment, for granted. At the time of the Coronation, monarchism had been almost as universal in Australia as in the United Kingdom; only 15 per cent of Australians, according to polls, favoured the idea of a republic. By 1991 an opinion poll in Scotland showed more Scots in favour of an elected president (48 per cent) than of retaining the Queen (43 per cent), should Scotland ever become independent.

Thus it was that the dreaded word, republicanism, previously the mark of a crank or a revolutionary, entered respectable and even Conservative discourse. Once the word had been uttered, it became inevitable that a debate that had been avoided for a hundred years would ensue.



Edited extracts from 'The Queen'

By Ben Pimlott

Abridged by Paul Valley

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Royal Knockout – own goal

By the end of 1945 it was clear that the Royal Family had had a good war. It emerged with its reputation enhanced, and much of the damage done by the Abdication repaired. Yet if the Monarch was unquestioned and uncriticised at the Coronation in 1953, public deference was buttressed in ways that could not be sustained indefinitely. In particular, disappearance of Empire would inevitably weaken its hold on the popular imagination.

For the time being, the media regarded anything that was potentially embarrassing to the Royal Family as untouchable. The war had developed habits of self-censorship, which newspaper owners eager for Establishment respectability encouraged. A Fleet Street consensus believed that "disloyal" stories were dynamite; any short-term gain in circulation would be wiped out by a longer-term loss of reputation. The message from the public appeared clear. People wanted warm, comfortable and reassuring coverage of the Royal Family, and would not buy newspapers that offered anything else.

It was a climate that gave Buckingham Palace an extraor-

dinary negative power, exercised in the person of the Queen's press secretary, Commander Richard Colville, an unbending ex-naval officer with no knowledge of the press, which he treated with a combination of distrust and lordly contempt. He felt little need to supply the press with information or facilities that did not directly support the impression Buckingham Palace wished to convey.

Even the BBC, ultra-sceptical in all its coverage, was treated by the Palace in the run-up to the Coronation with disdain. Rules were tight, and transgressors sharply rebuked. In May 1952, BE Nicolls, Director of Home Broadcasting, wrote tentatively asking for permission to film the arrival of the Queen at Balmoral for Television News. The reply was a firm refusal. "Since Her Majesty and her family are going to Balmoral privately for a short holiday," wrote Commander Colville, "I do not think it at all appropriate." Journalists called him "the Abominable No Man".

But by the time of Commander Colville's retirement in 1968, attitudes were changing. His replacement, William Heseltine, believed that there

was now a need to sell royalty to the public. Television was the key. The old Commander had regarded it as the work of the devil. His successor - with some encouragement from the Queen's consort - began to engineer a change of view. The result was *Royal Family*, a film for BBC television which provided a behind-the-scenes portrayal of what Commander Colville had dedicated his career to keeping hidden: the Queen's off-duty family life, including a scene of the Sovereign harlequining.

"The film showed that the Royal Family was made up of ordinary people like the rest of us," says a close friend of the Royal Family, who had doubted the wisdom of the enterprise. "But when you discover they are ordinary people you have different expectations of them."

And once the Royal Family got into the business of revealing secrets, could it pick and choose? In later years, many looked back and said the film "started the rot". Yet though given exceptional licence, the film still presented the monarchy as it wished to be seen.

The Palace expected the press to feel grateful. This was naïve. Appetites were whetted,

that was all. Cynics detected another motive behind Buckingham Palace's sudden interest in raising the Monarchy's public profile: money. The *Royal Family* film happened in a year in which royal finances became an issue for the first time.

By the end of the Sixties, Elizabeth had already reigned longer than her father, prices had risen at an accelerating pace and wage and salary bills had grown disproportionately. But if the Queen's ability to meet official expenditure out of Civil List funds - fixed at the beginning of her reign - had been impaired, the expanding economy, and her immunity from tax, had greatly increased her private fortune. This was to become a matter of increasing public debate.

In 1971, a new Civil List settlement was made, but at a price. In the process, a House of Commons Select Committee went some way towards defining the monarch's official duties. It put the Crown more seriously on the defensive than at any time since 1936 and the Abdication. The Queen, through her close advisers, had to present a convincing case that she gave value for money.

At this point, the monarchy offered an icon of stability; the harlequining Queen, leading the life of "a fairly conventional middle-class woman". It was an image of reassurance with its emphasis on family.

However, respect and envy for the domesticated embourgeoisied Royal Family was not the same as a restoration of reverence. A lucrative trade in

intimate royal photographs, established in the Sixties, was further stimulated in the Seventies by a circulation war among the tabloids. Yet even then the paparazzi did not challenge the "perfect family" ideal. On the whole, their images of royals relaxing heightened it.

It was the prospect of the marriage of the heir to the throne that marked the next stage. "Every working day of my five years at the Palace," says Ronald Allison, who was press secretary from 1973 to 1978, "there was a questioning of who Prince Charles would marry."

With the appearance in 1980 of Lady Diana Spencer, tabloid appetites, voracious at the best of times, passed all bounds. In a climate of total adulation, every aspect of the couple's lives was ruthlessly, carelessly examined. Critical faculties were suspended, praise overflowed.

How could the Palace-media nexus be questioned, when royalty succeeded in attracting such support? Articles appeared, congratulating royalty on, among other things, the brilliance of its public relations. But the danger was that excessive familiarity and availability would reap a whirlwind if and when the genetic lottery ceased to turn out good princes and princesses.

The fate of Margaret, the Diana of her day, should have provided a warning. To expose the Sovereign and her family to unlimited scrutiny, and to expect to find nothing but per-

fection, was to challenge fate. After the wedding, Diana achieved a rapport with the media, based on a kind of secret notion that she was a fifth columnist and, unlike the family she had married into, remained human. However, nothing in her previous existence had equipped her to deal with being doorstepped almost every day of her life.

Then, in the late autumn, it was announced that the Princess was expecting a baby. The Queen and Court were finally stirred into defensive action. In November, the new press secretary, Michael Shea, took the unusual step of asking the editors of all the national papers to a special briefing at Buckingham Palace. Of those invited, only Kelvin MacKenzie of *The Sun* did not attend. At the briefing Shea made a plea for mercy. Afterwards, in a vain hope of reinforcing the moral pressure, the editors were introduced to the Queen, who circulated among them.

The psychology was faulty. Once, Shea's direct approach might have worked. Now, however, tabloid rivalry had become so intense that appeals to editorial good nature had no impact. Deference was dead. Two months later, *The Sun* and *Daily Star* published pictures, taken with powerful telephoto lenses, that showed Diana wearing a bikini and visibly pregnant. When Shea issued a statement that indicated the Queen's extreme displeasure, the two papers expressed regret - and alongside republished the offending pictures.

The December meeting had been a tactical error. Now that the basest of the tabloids had shown that requests from the Palace could be ignored with impunity, there was no holding their rivals back.

A critical moment in the altering image of British royalty came with a television show in 1987 called *It's a Royal Knockout*. The project was an enthusiasm of the Queen's youngest son, Prince Edward, who had left the Royal Marines to work in the theatre. He was keen on a royal version of the slapstick programme, in which members of the royal family joined show business and sporting personalities who took part in ridiculous games.

"It was a terrible mistake," says one of the Monarch's friends. "She was against it. But one of her faults is that she can't say no." "There was not a single courtier," one recalls, "who did not think it was a mistake." Their advice was confounded by youthful enthusiasm and the Queen's maternal indulgence.

The programme was excruciating - "Give us a B..." belated the Duchess of York - and made the public stunningly aware that a sense of decorum was not an automatic quality in the Royal Family, and even that some members might be more deserving of their Civil List incomes than others.

In a way, it was the *reductio ad absurdum* of a process that had begun with *Royal Family*. Perhaps it was even a logical outcome. After *Knockout*, the quality press joined in too. Over the next few years the *Sunday Times* played an impor-

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jo brand's week

I'm not really a fan of the saying, "If you can't beat 'em join 'em", because it always smacks of giving in to something unsavoury. However, many women in Italy are joining 'em', "em" being the Mafia and you couldn't get much more unsavoury than that. Five years ago, just one woman was charged with membership of the Cosa Nostra and recently this figure has risen to 89. I'm afraid my knowledge of the Mafia extends only as far as *Godfathers II* and *III* and the women seem to have very little to do in those films, apart from having babies, getting hysterical at the drop of a hat or being blown up. Perhaps increasing equality is inevitably leading some women down the road of crime. It's no surprise to find that a lot of these new female Mafia recruits are employed in "white-collar" activities. Let's be honest, when it comes to actually chopping off the horse's head, I'm sure women are more of a soft touch than blokes.

I suppose there are only so many ways you can advertise painkillers and it was inevitable sometime that a pharmaceutical company would alight on the brilliant cliché of women not being able to "do the business" when they have a headache. However, this was the downfall of Hedex Ibuprofen, which portrayed some woman at it like a rabbit (in soft focus, mind you) having swallowed a couple of their pills. Seventy-two viewers, however, did not like this scene being shown while children were watching. So all I have to do to get that bloody awful, cringe-making, flesh-crawling ad about the talking car off the box is round up seventy-one people. Any offers?

Any women this week who are out to work, to college, to the shops, out on their own, wearing a short skirt or make-up, driving the car or just pleasing themselves, might like to spare a thought for the women of

Afghanistan who have found themselves landed bang in the middle of a medieval nightmare with the arrival of the Taliban fundamentalists. The Koran is about as accurate as Mystic Meg's predictions. As the curtains come down on the women in more than one sense, we should thank our lucky stars that we do not have to live in this sort of highted and cruel society and that men here do not attempt to control us in the hullylully way that the Taliban have laid down the law... apart from judges and Garry Bushell that is.

Apparently, the archetypal Labour candidate for the next election is a woman aged 40 to 44, who is or was a teacher, sits on the town council, doesn't like small talk, is a Christian, has contempt for the left and is a firm believer in law and order. Sounds appalling. Perhaps I should add, obviously thinks the sun



shines out of a certain orifice, looks like she's got a puker stuck up a certain orifice and talks out of a certain orifice. Come back Clare Short, before we all die beneath the withering gaze of this superwoman.

I wonder who this strange bloke is wandering round Aberdeen handing out wads of money. So far he has handed out a £300 tip to a taxi driver and tried to stuff handfuls of money into various people's pockets. He says he is a Lottery winner, although the Lottery lot have no knowledge of him. Typically the reaction to him has been that, rather than anything else, he is a bit mad. I suspect some sort of covert sociological experiment. I did a course at college called *ethnomethodology* on which we studied the minutiae of everyday social interaction by turning expected behaviour on its head. This involved doing sociological experiments like asking people the way somewhere, pretending not to understand and

detailing their reaction. Reactions ranged from an assumption that we were mad, to anger, to one poor person getting so frustrated he put the student in question in his car and drove him to the place. It is very easy, if behaviour strays from the expected us in the case of the Aberdeen money dunnit, for people not to be able to incorporate it into something that makes sense. Perhaps he's just a nice bloke.

Wisława Szymborska, and not Bob Dylan, has won the Nobel Prize for literature. Poor old Bob, despite catching the imagination of a whole generation, it seems his at times unfathomable lyrics were just too much for the judges. Still, I'm sure Bob's conversion to Christianity will enable him to rise above it.

I wonder which post-war poem is going to win the National Poetry Day poll. Bob Dylan and John Betjeman are in with a chance apparently. Last year a similar poll for the all-time favourite came up with 'If' by Rudyard Kipling, which demonstrated that English 'O' level lives on in many minds. It would be nice to see a slightly unusual poem come in first, but the nature of these polls is that we choose the one poem or song we can remember, which by its very nature will be populist. Fingers crossed for Bob. Can he take two defeats in such a short space of time?